

Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome, and Constantinople: The Peter Cycle in the Oratory of Pope John VII (705–707)

ANN VAN DIJK

In 1605 Pope Paul V ordered the east end of old St. Peter's nave, the last section of the early Christian basilica still standing, destroyed to make way for the new church then under construction.¹ Condemned along with the Constantinian structure were the many chapels it housed, among them the oratory of Pope John VII (705–707), a richly decorated chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary that occupied the east end of the church's outermost north aisle.² Unlike his sixteenth-century predecessors responsible for earlier demolition campaigns at the site, Pope Paul V provided for the preservation of "memoriae" from the old church, as well as for detailed documentation of the structure "in pictura et scriptura."³ The job of implementing these provisions fell to Giacomo Grimaldi, whose drawings and descriptions have provided scholars ever since with some of the most detailed information known about the early Christian basilica.⁴ Grimaldi was also instrumental in creating a type of museum in the crypt under the new St. Peter's, known as the Vatican grottoes, consisting of painted views of the old church, as well as artifacts from its many altars and chapels.⁵

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¹On the destruction of old St. Peter's, see R. Krautheimer et al., *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae*, vol. 5 (Vatican City, 1977), 184 f; J. H. Jongkees, *Studies in Old St. Peter's* (Groningen, 1966), 41–43.

²Van Dijk, "The Oratory of Pope John VII." The location of the chapel is clearly marked as no. 114 on Tiberio Alfarano's plan of old St. Peter's: see Tiberius Alpharanus, *De Basilicae Vaticanae Antiquissima et Nova Structura*, ed. D. M. Cerrati, ST 26 (Vatican City, 1914), pl. 1, p. 179 ff, for a transcription of the plan's legend, and p. 194 for the oratory. On the date and origins of this plan, see P. Silvan, "Le origini della pianta di Tiberio Alfarano," *RendPontAcc* 62 (1989–90): 3–23.

³G. Grimaldi, *Descrizione della basilica antica di S. Pietro in Vaticano: Codice Barberini latino 2733*, ed. R. Niggel (Vatican City, 1972), 148.

⁴R. Niggel, "Giacomo Grimaldi (1568–1623): Leben und Werk des römischen Archäologen und Historikers" (Ph.D. diss., Ludwig-Maximilians Universität, 1971).

⁵*Ibid.*, 16, 36 f; van Dijk, "Oratory," 9–32, with further bibliography.

The destruction of the nave began soon after the demolition order was announced and proceeded from west to east; the oratory of John VII survived until 1609.⁶ Just before it came down, Grimaldi had numerous fragments of the mosaic and sculptural decoration taken to the Vatican grottoes to be preserved and exhibited, where many of them remain to this day.⁷ In addition, he commissioned a series of detailed studies of individual panels of the mosaic decoration, now kept in a volume of drawings known as the Album (Vatican Library, MS Archivio di S. Pietro A64 ter).⁸ He also composed a lengthy description of the oratory, illustrated with additional drawings, that is preserved in seven autograph manuscripts ranging in date from 1612 to 1621.⁹

Among the drawings illustrating Grimaldi's description is one showing a Peter cycle: six scenes arranged in three registers narrating primarily apocryphal events from the apostle's life (Fig. 1). Grimaldi clearly identifies the events depicted.¹⁰ Beginning with two images of Peter preaching in Jerusalem and Antioch, the action then moves to Rome and presents highlights from the apostle's career in the imperial capital as recounted in two related hagiographic texts, a *Passio* of the two apostles, known in both Greek and Latin versions, and a Greek *Acta*.¹¹ After an additional preaching scene, the encounter with and triumph over Simon Magus are recounted in two episodes: Peter, now joined by Paul, appearing with Simon Magus before Nero, followed by the magician's flight and subsequent fall as a result of the apostles' prayers. The cycle then closes with Peter and Paul's ensuing martyrdom at the hands of Nero.

⁶Niggl, "Giacomo Grimaldi," 39 f.

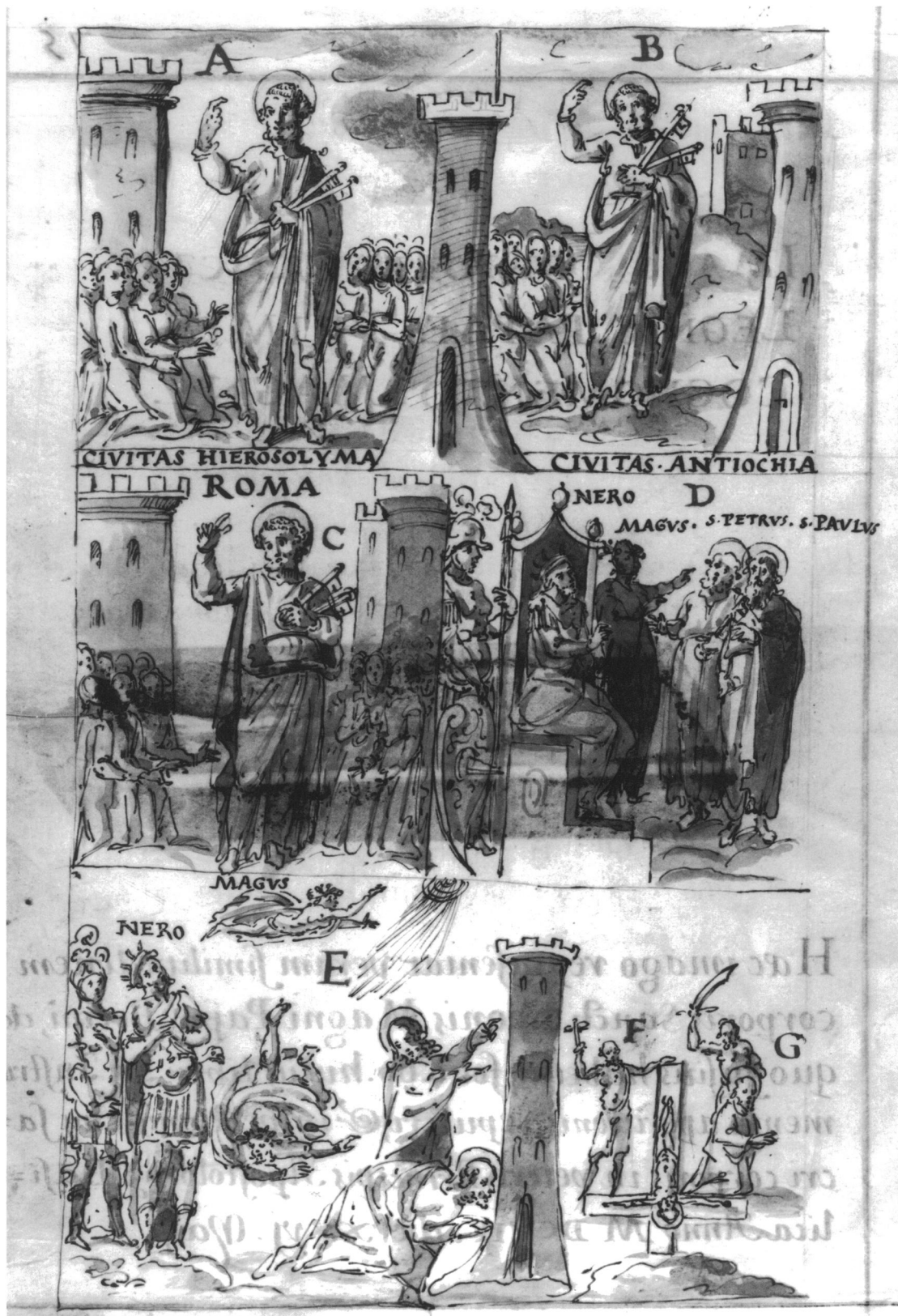
⁷For the history of the various fragments of the oratory's decoration after their detachment, see M. Andaloro, "I mosaici dell'Oratorio di Giovanni VII," in *Fragmenta Picta: Affreschi e mosaici staccati del medioevo romano*, ed. M. Andaloro et al. (Rome, 1989), 169–77; P. J. Nordhagen, "The Mosaics of John VII (705–707 A.D.)," *ActaIRN* 2 (1965): 121–66, repr. in idem, *Studies in Byzantine and Early Medieval Painting* (London, 1990), 58–130, esp. 62–82 (subsequent page references to this and the following article are to the reprints); idem, "A Carved Marble Pilaster in the Vatican Grottoes: Some Remarks on the Sculptural Techniques of the Early Middle Ages," *ActaIRN* 4 (1969): 113–19, repr. in idem, *Studies*, 391–403; O. Etinhof, "I mosaici di Roma nella raccolta di P. Sevastianov," *BA* 76, no. 66 (1991): 29–38.

⁸Niggl, "Giacomo Grimaldi," 40, 308. These drawings are published in S. Waetzoldt, *Die Kopien des 17. Jahrhunderts nach Mosaiken und Wandmalereien in Rom* (Vienna-Munich, 1964), cat. nos. 896–900, figs. 479–83.

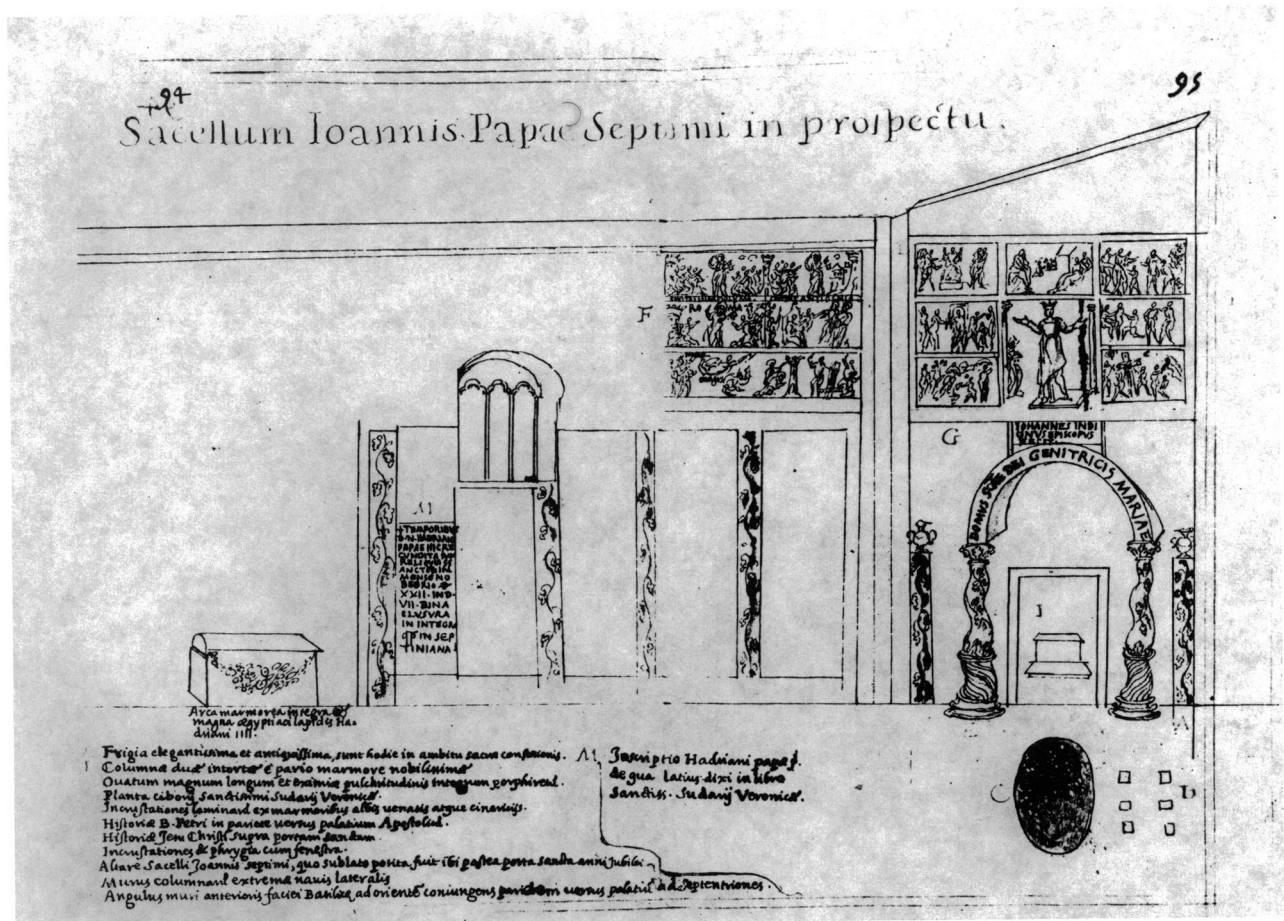
⁹Grimaldi's description of the oratory forms part of two larger works, the *Instrumenta autentica translationum sanctorum corporum et sacrarum reliquiarum e veteri in novam principis apostolorum basilicam* (hereafter *Instrumenta*) and the *Opusculum de sacrosancto Veronice sudario ac lancea qua salvatoris nostri Iesu Christi latus patuit in vaticana basilica maxima veneratione asservatis* (hereafter *Opusculum*). Although found in two separate works, Grimaldi's description of the oratory is essentially a single text, albeit one that varies somewhat from manuscript to manuscript, allowing the reader to trace the author's evolving thoughts on the monument: see van Dijk, "Oratory," 14–33. Out of the seven surviving autograph manuscripts of these works, I have consulted four: two copies of the *Opusculum* (Vatican Library, MS Archivio di S. Pietro H3, dated 1618, and Florence, Bib. Naz. MS II-III-173, dated 1620) and two copies of the *Instrumenta*, both in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (MS Barb. lat. 2732, dated 1612, and MS Barb. lat. 2733, dated 1619–20). The last of these manuscripts has been published in facsimile (see note 3 above), and in this edition the description of the oratory is found on pp. 105–13, 117–28, and 257–59. On the creation of the *Instrumenta* and for a full list of the surviving manuscripts of both works, see Niggl, "Giacomo Grimaldi," 35 ff, 154–78, 182–205.

¹⁰Grimaldi, *Descrizione*, 105, 117.

¹¹Both texts were compiled ca. 450–550 from earlier material. The texts are published in R. Lipsius and M. Bonnet, eds., *Acta apostolorum apocrypha*, vol. 1 (Darmstadt, 1959), 118–222; see also M. Erbetta, ed., *Gli apocrifi del Nuovo Testamento*, vol. 2 (Turin, 1966), 178–92; E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, trans. R. McL. Wilson et al., rev. ed., vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1992), 440–42; J. T. Shotwell and L. R. Loomis, *The See of Peter* (New York, 1927), 168–81.



1 Peter cycle in the oratory of John VII. Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, Barb. lat. 2732, fol. 75v (photo: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana)



2 General view of the oratory of John VII. Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, Barb. lat. 2733, fols. 94v–95r (photo: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana)



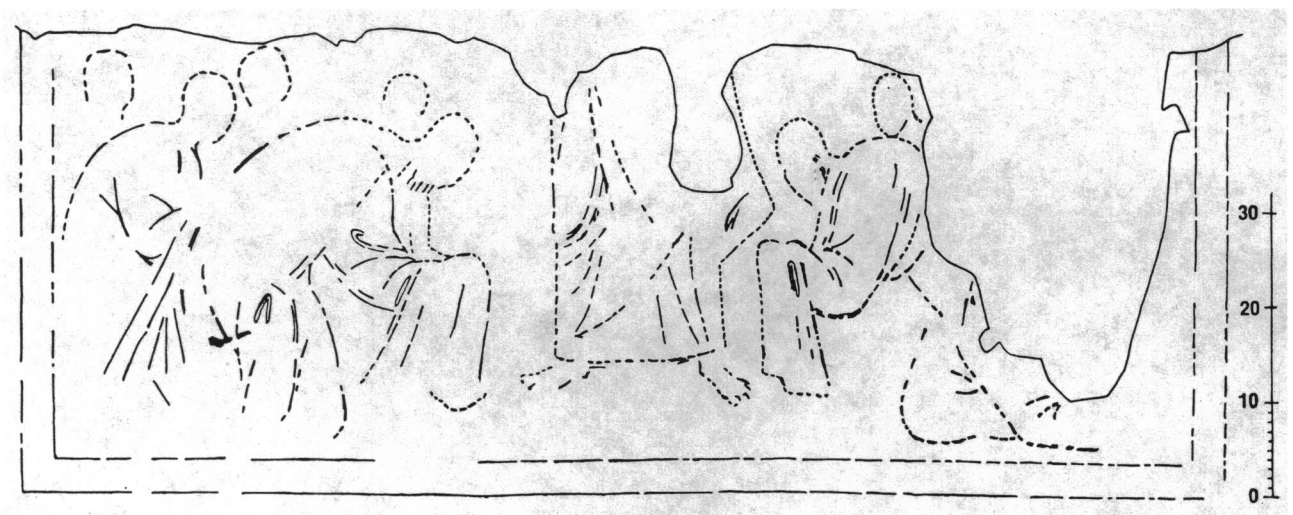
3 Christological cycle in the oratory of John VII. Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, Barb. lat. 2732, fols. 76v–77r
(photo: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana)



4 Mosaic fragment of St. Peter preaching, from the oratory of John VII. Vatican grottoes
(photo: Reverenda Fabbrica di S. Pietro)



5a Appearance to the Apostles in Proskynesis, fresco. Rome, Sta. Maria Antiqua
(photo: Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione)



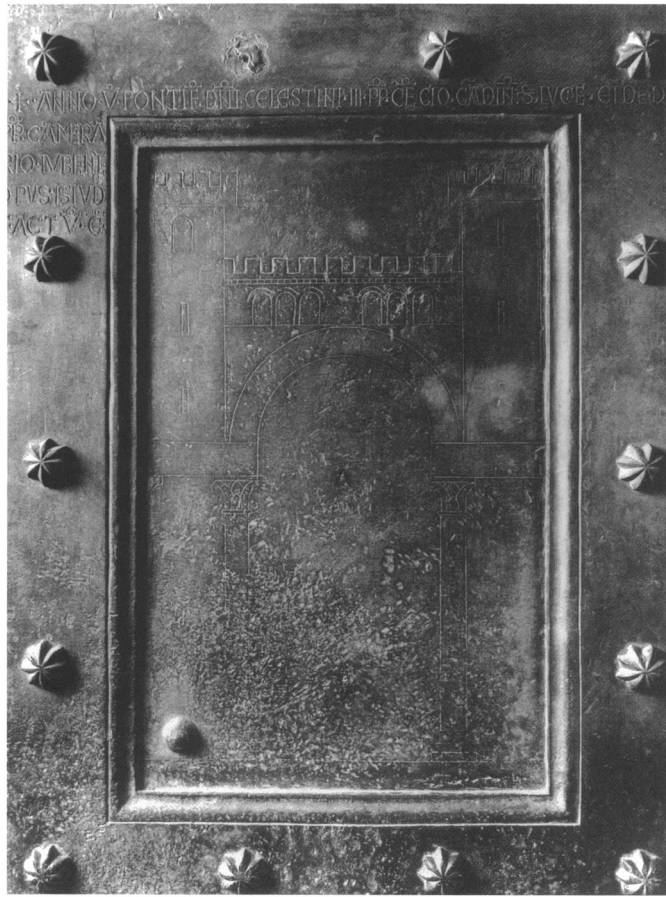
5b Tracing (photo: after Nordhagen, "Frescoes of John VII," pl. XXXVI)



6 Mosaic fragment of Adoration of the Magi, from the oratory of John VII. Rome, Sta. Maria in Cosmedin (photo: Monumenti, Musei e Gallerie Pontificie Vaticane)



7 Peter and Paul fresco cycle. Münstair, St. Johann (photo: B. Brenk)



8 Rome, Lateran Baptistery, detail of the bronze doors of Celestine III for the Chapel of St. John the Evangelist (photo: after Iacobini, "Porte bronzee," fig. 22)



9 Miracle of the Quails. Rome, Sta. Maria Maggiore (photo: Monumenti, Musei e Gallerie Pontificie Vaticane)



10 Slaying of the Firstborn Egyptians, copy of a fresco formerly in Rome, S. Paolo fuori le mura. Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, Barb. lat. 4406, fol. 56r (photo: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana)



11 Slaying of the Firstborn Egyptians, copy of a fresco formerly in Rome, S. Paolo fuori le mura. Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, Barb. lat. 4406, fol. 62r (photo: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana)



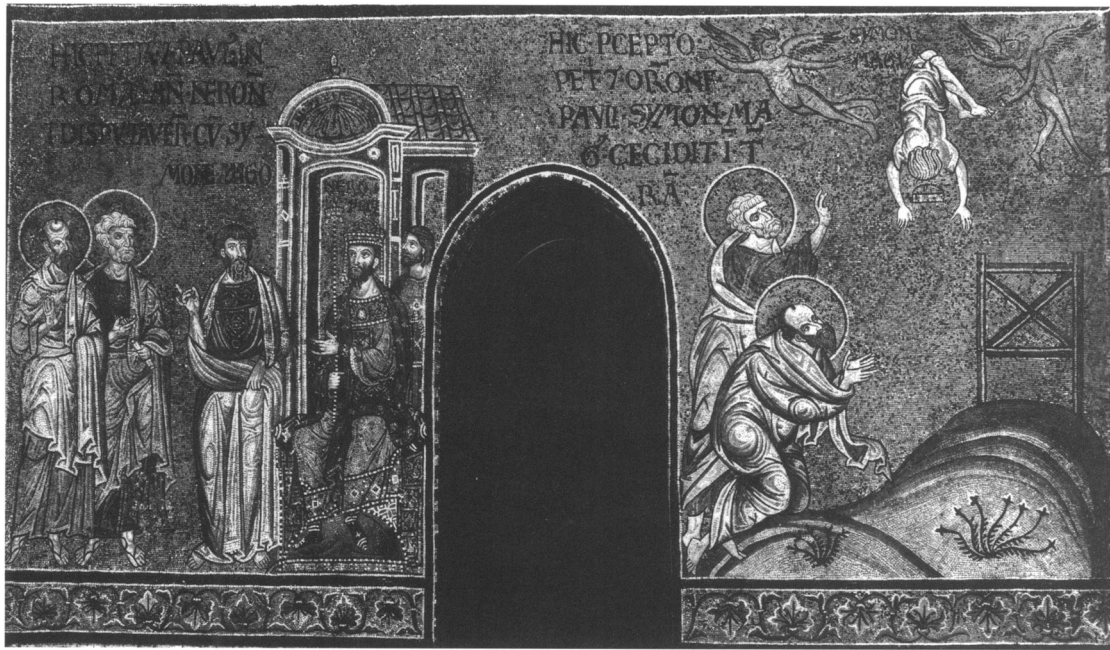
12 Dispute of the Magi, detail. Grottaferrata, Monastery museum (photo: V. Pace)



13 Dispute of Peter, Paul, and Simon Magus before Nero. Müstair, St. Johann
(photo: Susanne Fibbi-Aeppli)



14 Flight and Fall of Simon Magus. Tuscania, S. Pietro
(photo: Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione)



15 Dispute of Peter, Paul, and Simon Magus before Nero, Fall of Simon Magus. Monreale, Cathedral (photo: Alinari/Art Resource, NY)



16 Paul preaching in Rome. Müstair, St. Johann (photo: B. Brenk)



17 Paul preaching in the synagogue, copy of a fresco formerly in Rome, S. Paolo fuori le mura. Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, Barb. lat. 4406, fol. 92r (photo: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana)

Grimaldi informs us that these images were made of mosaic and that they were found on the north (i.e., side) wall of the oratory, thus secondary in position and importance to the more extensive christological cycle on the east wall (Fig. 2). The christological cycle was arranged around a regal and imposing image of the Virgin Mary in orant pose, to whom the smaller figure of John VII was represented offering a model of the oratory (Fig. 3). Directly below, a type of ciborium supported by two twisted vine scroll columns sheltered the altar, in front of which John VII was buried. In the lower sections of wall beneath the mosaics, sheets of gray and white stone revetment alternated with vertical acanthus scroll friezes. The richness of the decoration suggests that John VII intended to impress viewers by its opulence, an intention that the pope's epitaph confirms: "Previous squalor removed, he brought together splendor from all parts, so that posterity might be amazed by the lavishness."¹²

The surviving fragments of the oratory also testify to the richness of its decoration, as well as to the general accuracy of Grimaldi's documentation. Still preserved at St. Peter's are the twisted vine scroll columns and the acanthus scroll friezes, beautifully carved *spolia* from the Severan period.¹³ Eight fragments of the gold ground mosaics also survive, corroborating Grimaldi's record of the pictorial decoration.¹⁴ With one exception, however, the mosaic fragments all come from the oratory's east wall and include the large central figure of Mary, the bust of John VII, and pieces from the Nativity, Adoration of the Magi, and Entry into Jerusalem. The exception is a small, heavily restored fragment, showing the bust of Peter from the scene of the apostle preaching in Rome, the sole physical survival from the mosaics on the north wall (Fig. 4).¹⁵ The studies in the Album display a similar bias, recording only christological scenes. In comparison to the christological cycle, therefore, the evidence for the Peter cycle is meager. Grimaldi commented on the poor state of these mosaics' preservation which may account for the relative lack of interest in them in the seventeenth century.¹⁶ The result, however, is that today the drawing and description in the Grimaldi manuscripts are the only sources of information about these mosaics.

This situation is likely the reason why scholars of the oratory have rarely devoted more than a sentence or two to this feature of the decoration. Of those who mention the

¹²"Hic decus omne loco, prisco squalore remoto, / Contulit, ut stupeat prodiga posteritas. . . ." The epitaph is published in W. Levison, "Aus Englischen Bibliotheken II," in *NA* 35 (Hannover-Leipzig, 1910; repr. 1985), 363 f. For a full translation, see van Dijk, "Oratory," 116.

¹³The twisted vine scroll columns are currently in the Chapel of the Sacrament, as Cerrati first noted in his commentary to Alpharantus, *De Structura*, 55; on these columns see also van Dijk, "Oratory," 108–15. On the acanthus scroll friezes, see *ibid.*, 98–103; Nordhagen, "Pilaster," 113–19, 391–403; J. M. C. Toynbee and J. B. Ward Perkins, "Peopled Scrolls: A Hellenistic Motif in Imperial Art," *PBSR* 18 (1950): 20 f, 23.

¹⁴Andaloro, "Mosaici," 169–77; Nordhagen, "Mosaics," 58–130; Etinhof, "Mosaici di Roma," 29–38. For a detailed assessment of the accuracy of Grimaldi's documentation of the oratory's christological cycle, see van Dijk, "Oratory," 42–77; P. J. Nordhagen, "The Integration of the Nativity and the Annunciation to the Shepherds in Byzantine Art," in *Acts of the Twenty-Second International Congress on the History of Art, Budapest, 1969*, vol. 1 (Budapest, 1972), 253–57, repr. in *idem*, *Studies*, 318–25.

¹⁵Nordhagen, "Mosaics," 79 f, cat. no. 8. Grimaldi mentions that the fragment was taken from the scene of Peter preaching to the Romans, and when Francesco Maria Torrigio wrote the first guide to the Vatican grottoes, the fragment still retained its ROMA inscription: see Grimaldi, *Descrizione*, 117; F. M. Torrigio, *Le sacre grotte vaticane* (Viterbo, 1618), 78.

¹⁶The comment is found in the *Opusculum* manuscript of 1618, Vatican Library, MS Archivio di S. Pietro H3, fols. 21v–22r: see Grimaldi, *Descrizione*, 40 n.41.

Peter cycle at all, most have assumed that it was an original feature of the oratory's decoration but have expended little or no energy on demonstrating that the assumption is a valid one.¹⁷ The only exceptions are Guglielmo Matthiae and William Tronzo who, however, took opposing points of view on the subject.¹⁸ Arguing on the side of tradition, Matthiae attempted to draw stylistic comparisons between Grimaldi's drawing of the Peter cycle and the surviving frescoes John VII commissioned in Sta. Maria Antiqua. Tronzo, on the other hand, pointed out a number of disturbing anomalies in the Peter cycle drawing in order to argue that these mosaics were not an original component of the oratory's decoration but a later addition, possibly dating to the twelfth century. Tronzo concluded that in fact none of the decoration of the north wall was original, and that the oratory initially consisted only of the decoration of the east wall. Neither Matthiae's nor Tronzo's argument is entirely convincing, although both made important observations that need to be factored into any assessment of the Peter cycle. While the poor state of the evidence makes it unlikely that it will ever be possible to provide definitive answers to the questions the Peter cycle poses, this essay examines the issue afresh with the aim of proposing a new and hopefully more satisfactory solution to the puzzle.¹⁹

There is no inherent reason why John VII could not have included a Peter cycle in the decoration of his oratory. Already in the early Christian period, pictorial hagiographic narratives decorated the walls of churches and other structures in Rome. Two scenes illustrating the martyrdom of three unknown saints, dating to the second half of the fourth century, survive in the Christian community house underneath SS. Giovanni e Paolo on the Coelian hill, and by the fifth century an extensive fresco cycle illustrating the life of St. Paul decorated the left nave wall of St. Paul's Outside the Walls.²⁰ Also dating

¹⁷A. Weis, "Ein Petruszyklus des 7. Jahrhunderts im Querschiff der Vatikanischen Basilika," *RQ* 58 (1963): 244–48; C. K. Carr, "Aspects of the Iconography of Saint Peter in Medieval Art of Western Europe to the Early Thirteenth Century" (Ph.D. diss., Case Western Reserve University, 1978), 146 ff passim; J. Wilpert and W. N. Schumacher, *Die römischen Mosaiken der kirchlichen Bauten vom IV.–XIII. Jahrhundert* (Freiburg in Breisgau, 1976), 332–34; L. Eleen, *The Illustration of the Pauline Epistles in French and English Bibles of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Oxford, 1982), 9.

¹⁸G. Matthiae, *Pittura romana del Medioevo*, 2d ed., vol. 1 (Rome, 1987), 104 f; W. Tronzo, "Setting and Structure in Two Roman Wall Decorations of the Early Middle Ages," *DOP* 41 (1987): 489–92.

¹⁹While beyond the scope of this study, a thorough technical analysis of the surviving fragment of the Peter cycle might yield valuable evidence for resolving the question of date. The brief comments in Nordhagen, "Mosaics," 79 f, cat. no. 8 are the only discussion of this type. It is to be hoped that such an analysis will be carried out in the future.

²⁰On the hagiographic scenes under SS. Giovanni e Paolo, see J. Wilpert, *Die römischen Mosaiken und Malereien der kirchlichen Bauten vom IV. bis XIII. Jahrhundert* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1916), 2:633 f, 4: pl. 127 f; A. M. Colini, "Storia e topografia del Coelio," *Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia*, ser. 3, Memoria 7 (1944): 177–79; L. Jessop, "Pictorial Cycles of Non-Biblical Saints: The Evidence of the 8th Century Mural Cycles in Rome" (Ph.D. diss., University of Victoria, 1993), 49–61. The remains of the cycle in St. Paul's Outside the Walls perished in 1823 in the fire that destroyed the church. On this cycle see L. Eleen, "The Frescoes from the Life of St. Paul in San Paolo fuori le mura in Rome: Early Christian or Medieval?" *RACAR* 12 (1985): 251–59; H. Kessler, "'Caput et Speculum Omnium Ecclesiarum': Old St. Peter's and Church Decoration in Medieval Latium," in *Italian Church Decoration of the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance: Functions, Forms and Regional Traditions*, ed. W. Tronzo (Bologna, 1989), 122–24. The question of a corresponding Peter cycle (other than the one in the oratory of John VII) in old St. Peter's is vexed. In the late 16th century, Giacomo Grimaldi noted the existence of a mosaic Peter cycle in very poor condition in the church's right transept. It is possible that this cycle dated to the early medieval period and predated the Peter cycle in the oratory of John VII: see Weis, "Petruszyklus"; van Dijk, "Oratory," 173–92, esp. 186–92. W. Tronzo, "The Prestige of St. Peter's: Observations on the Function of Monumental Narrative Cycles in Italy," in *Pictorial*

to the fifth century is Prudentius' description of a painting depicting the martyrdom of Hippolytos that he saw above the saint's tomb in Rome.²¹

During the seventh and eighth centuries, however, this type of imagery appears to have become particularly popular.²² Frescoes illustrating the legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesos and the Martyrdom of St. Erasmus, now detached, originally adorned the walls of the first church of Sta. Maria in Via Lata. At Sta. Maria Antiqua, scenes of the Death of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste are still visible in the left aisle and in the oratory of the Forty Martyrs, and a cycle devoted to the martyrdoms of SS. Quiricus and Julitta decorates the Theodotus chapel. Fragments of a hagiographic cycle depicting the martyrdom of St. Callixtus, bishop of Rome 217–222, adorn the chamber originally containing the saint's tomb in the catacomb of Calepodius. All of these frescoes have been dated between the mid-seventh and the mid-eighth centuries, testifying to the practice of decorating Roman churches and other structures with narrative hagiographic imagery in the period around John VII's pontificate.²³

The increased incidence of this type of imagery at this particular time in Rome has been linked to a concurrent influx of Greek-speaking immigrants.²⁴ Many of the surviving cycles depict eastern saints whose cult in Rome was either introduced by or strongly associated with members of the Greek-speaking population.²⁵ Moreover, although no

Narrative in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, ed. H. Kessler and M. S. Simpson, *Studies in the History of Art* 16 (Washington, D.C., 1985), 105, suggested that a Peter cycle may have originally decorated the left nave wall of old St. Peter's, corresponding to the Paul cycle in St. Paul's, and that this cycle was replaced in the early Middle Ages by the christological cycle known from the 17th-century drawings, necessitating the creation of a new Peter cycle in the transept. However, H. L. Kessler, "Old St. Peter's as the Source and Inspiration of Medieval Church Decoration," in *Studies in Pictorial Narrative* (London, 1994), 455–57 rejected the possibility of an early Christian Peter cycle on the left wall of old St. Peter's, arguing that since Peter's biography begins in the Gospels, the christological narratives would have served, in part, to introduce the apostle and establish his role in sacred history.

²¹The painting is described in *Peristephanon liber*, 11, lines 123–44: see *Prudentius*, ed. and trans. H. J. Thomson, vol. 2 (London-Cambridge, Mass., 1953), 312–15. For discussion of this text, see A.-M. Palmer, *Prudentius on the Martyrs* (Oxford, 1989), 248–50, 273–75; Jessop, "Non-Biblical Saints," 28–30.

²²Jessop, "Non-Biblical Saints," 64–111, 117–26; L. Jessop, "Pictorial Cycles of Non-Biblical Saints: The Seventh- and Eighth-Century Mural Cycles in Rome and Contexts for Their Use," *PBSR* 47 (1999): 233–79 (hereafter Jessop, "Non-Biblical Saints" [1999]).

²³The Quiricus and Julitta cycle in Sta. Maria Antiqua is dated firmly to the pontificate of Zacharias (741–752): see G. B. Ladner, *I ritratti dei papi nell'antichità e nel medioevo* (Vatican City, 1941–84), 1:101–3, 2:23–25. The two scenes from an Erasmus cycle in Sta. Maria in Via Lata have been dated to the same period on stylistic grounds: see M. R. Tosti-Croce, "Gli affreschi di Santa Maria in Via Lata," in *Fragmenta Picta* (as above, note 7), 191. The Erasmus frescoes originally covered an earlier fresco layer with scenes from the legend of the Seven Sleepers, which have been dated to the 7th century: see *ibid.*, 180 f. The two scenes of the Death of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste in the left aisle of Sta. Maria Antiqua and in the oratory of the Forty Martyrs have been associated with other frescoes securely dated to the pontificate of Martin I (649–655) on the bases of style and paleography: see P. J. Nordhagen, "The Earliest Decorations in Santa Maria Antiqua and Their Date," *ActaIRNorv* 1 (1962): 53, repr. in *idem*, *Studies* (as above, note 7), 167; *idem*, "The Frescoes of the Seventh Century," *ActaIRNorv* 8 (1978): 133–35, 138 f, repr. in *idem*, *Studies*, 219 f, 221–23. For the Callixtus cycle in the catacomb of Calepodius, see A. Nestori, "La catacomba di Calepodio al III miglio dell'Aurelia vetus e i sepolcri dei papi Callisto I e Giulio I," *RACr* 47 (1971): 169–278; J. Osborne, "The Roman Catacombs in the Middle Ages," *PBSR* 53 (1985): 313–16.

²⁴Osborne, "Roman Catacombs," 287–89; Jessop, "Non-Biblical Saints," 131–40; Jessop, "Non-Biblical Saints" (1999).

²⁵J.-M. Sansterre, *Les moines grecs et orientaux à Rome aux époques byzantine et carolingienne (milieu du VIe s.–fin du IXe s.)*, vol. 1 (Brussels, 1983), 147–62.

early eastern hagiographic cycles survive, the textual evidence suggests that pictorial saints' lives gained their greatest initial popularity in the eastern Mediterranean.²⁶ John VII was himself Greek by birth.²⁷ The inclusion of Greek inscriptions among the frescoes and on the ambo he commissioned in Sta. Maria Antiqua, as well as on the sarcophagus in which he was buried in his oratory, provide clear evidence that he identified himself with the Greek population in Rome.²⁸ Given the circumstances of time, place, and patronage, therefore, the inclusion of a narrative cycle illustrating events from the life of St. Peter in the oratory of Pope John VII is entirely possible.

Moreover, when placed side by side, the drawings of the two narrative cycles in John VII's oratory display a number of shared features that suggest a common date of origin (Figs. 1, 3). Both cycles arrange the narrative in three superimposed registers, and both follow the same general pattern of simpler compositions, with fewer scenes per panel, in the upper registers and more complicated, polyscenic compositions in the bottom register. In particular, the reduced scale of the martyrdom scenes in the Peter cycle can be compared to the small scenes of the Raising of Lazarus, the Last Supper, and the Women at the Tomb in the upper corners of the bottom panels on the east wall.

The compositions of some of the individual scenes in the two cycles are also closely related. The arrangement of figures in the Dispute of Peter, Paul, and Simon Magus before Nero closely duplicates the Adoration of the Magi, and the composition of the preaching scenes in the Peter cycle finds a parallel in two of the post-Resurrection scenes among the frescoes John VII commissioned in Sta. Maria Antiqua, the Incredulity of Thomas and the Appearance to the Apostles in Proskynesis.²⁹ The latter especially, showing two groups of disciples kneeling to either side of the central standing figure of Christ, is almost identical to the composition of the preaching scenes in the oratory's Peter cycle (Fig. 5).

The inscriptions are a third common feature. Names positioned above the heads of the figures they identify appear in the drawings of both oratory cycles as well as in the frescoed christological cycle John VII commissioned in Sta. Maria Antiqua. Those differentiating the locations of the three preaching scenes also have parallels in the John VII material in Sta. Maria Antiqua; although they have largely disappeared now, at the beginning of the century J. Wilpert was able to distinguish the words [Cí]VITAS [Em]MAUS identifying the city in the fresco of Christ's Appearance at Emmaus in the presbytery and [Be]-TULIA in the scene of Judith and Holofernes on one of the transennae.³⁰ Finally, narrative cycles in mosaic are relatively rare throughout the Middle Ages in Rome; therefore, the fact that both cycles in the oratory shared this medium has some significance.

As Tronzo pointed out, however, placing the drawings of the two cycles side by side

²⁶Jessop, "Non-Biblical Saints," 30–41.

²⁷The *Liber Pontificalis* describes John VII as "natione Grecus": see *Le Liber Pontificalis*, ed. L. Duchesne and C. Vogel, 2d ed., vol. 1 (Paris, 1955–57), 385.

²⁸On the painted Greek inscription in Sta. Maria Antiqua, see P. J. Nordhagen, "The Frescoes of John VII (A.D. 705–707) in S. Maria Antiqua in Rome," *Acta IRNORv* 3 (1968): 47 f, 121 f. On the Greek inscription adorning the ambo base, see G. McN. Rushforth, "S. Maria Antiqua," *PBSR* 1 (1902): 89–91. On the Greek inscription adorning John VII's sarcophagus, see Grimaldi, *Descrizione*, 259; van Dijk, "Oratory," 28–31.

²⁹This was first noted by Matthiae, *Pittura*, 105. On the scenes in Sta. Maria Antiqua, see Nordhagen, "Frescoes of John VII," 32 f, 35–38.

³⁰Wilpert, *Mosaiken und Malereien*, 2:267, 4: pl. 191; Nordhagen, "Frescoes of John VII," 38, 70.

reveals a number of discrepancies between them that need to be taken into account as well.³¹ One of the most eye-catching is Peter's pronounced size relative to the other figures in the preaching scenes. Tronzo noted that while a similar scale discrepancy occurs in the central panel of the christological cycle, showing the Virgin Mary and John VII, in the individual scenes of the surrounding narrative cycle it occurs only as a means to indicate spatial, not hierarchical, relationships. The observation may be true of the drawing of the christological cycle; however, it is not borne out by the surviving mosaic fragments. In the fragment of the Adoration of the Magi, for example, the seated figure of Mary clearly dwarfs the relatively less important Joseph standing behind her (Fig. 6). The surviving fragments of the Nativity, moreover, indicate that the scale used for the midwives washing the Christ child in the foreground of the scene was approximately two-thirds of that used for the figure of Mary reclining just behind them.³² Peter's visual prominence on the oratory's north wall, therefore, was closely matched by Mary's on the east wall.

More serious is Tronzo's observation that the use of architecture to frame the individual scenes in the Peter cycle has no parallel in the christological cycle. This is not entirely true; architecture is used as a framing device in at least one instance in the christological cycle, the archway that separates the Presentation in the Temple from the Baptism. However, the distinctive form of the towers in the Peter cycle, with their tall, slender proportions, crenelated tops, and, relative to the figures, tiny doors and windows are unique to this cycle and find no parallels in any other John VII material. In fact, the closest comparison I have been able to find for both the form and the function of the architecture in the Peter cycle is the tower that separates the Decapitation of Paul from the Burial of the Apostles in the Peter and Paul cycle decorating the left apse at Müstair, frescoes that B. Brenk dated to the third quarter of the twelfth century (Fig. 7).³³ In Rome, comparable towers with narrow windows and crenelated tops appear on the bronze doors Pope Celestine III (1191–98) commissioned for the chapel of St. John the Evangelist in the Lateran

³¹Tronzo, "Setting and Structure," 490 f. Some of Tronzo's arguments, however, are less convincing. The "pronounced sway" he notes in the figures probably has more to do with conventions of drawing in the 17th century than the figure style of the mosaics the drawings copy. His comments about the "odd" placement of the Peter cycle on the north wall and the differences between decoration of the two walls also fail to convince for a number of reasons. First, these observations take into account neither the fairly amateurish quality of the drawings recording the mosaics' placement in the oratory, nor the fact that they vary widely among themselves. Moreover, in contrast to the drawings of the individual narrative cycles which already appear in the first Grimaldi manuscript, the *Instrumenta* of 1612 (Vatican Library, MS Barb. lat. 2732: on the date of this manuscript, see van Dijk, "Oratory," 14 n. 38), the earliest of those showing the whole chapel, and therefore the relationship of the various components of the decoration to each other, appears only six years later in the *Opusculum* of 1618 (Vatican Library, MS Archivio di S. Pietro H3, fols. 122v–123r) and thus some nine years after the chapel's destruction. By that time such details as the precise placement of the Peter cycle on the north wall and the exact relationship of the decoration on the two walls to each other had probably receded from memory. Moreover, the surviving fragments of the lower wall revetment, the six acanthus scroll friezes currently in the Vatican grottoes, indicate that this part of the decoration of the two walls at least was coeval: see van Dijk, "Oratory," 97–104; S. de Blaauw, *Cultus et Decor: Liturgia e architettura nella Roma tardoantica e medievale*, vol. 2, ST 356 (Vatican City, 1994), 572–74.

³²The head of Mary measures approximately 15 cm from chin to crown; that of the surviving midwife measures only 10 cm.

³³B. Brenk, *Der romanische Wandmalerei in der Schweiz* (Bern, 1963), 44–49, 61. Similar towers appear in the contemporary frescoes decorating the other two apses.

baptistery, although in this case they form part of a gatelike structure (Fig. 8).³⁴ The towers in the drawing of the oratory's Peter cycle, therefore, provide some of the strongest evidence in support of Tronzo's argument that this part of the decoration dated to the twelfth century.

Also noteworthy is the distinction he drew between the borders of the two cycles, pointing out that the wide, inscribed border beneath the top register of the Peter cycle has no counterpart in the christological cycle. This same feature, however, constitutes an anomaly within the Peter cycle itself, which Tronzo failed to appreciate; in the bottom two registers the wide border disappears and the inscriptions appear within the scenes, just as they do in the christological cycle. How to account for this internal inconsistency? The most plausible explanation is one that no scholar has yet seriously entertained: that the Peter cycle experienced at least one major restoration during the course of its history. This is most evident in the inconsistent placement of the inscriptions, but restoration could also account for the unusual towers, which appear most prominently in the top register where they coincide with the anomalous inscribed borders. However, the crenelated structures are not confined to the top register; they also appear in the scene of Peter preaching in Rome, as well as in the bottom register, where a tower divides the Flight and Fall of Simon Magus from the martyrdom scenes. There are two possible explanations for this. One is that the restoration, and hence the crenelated towers, were in fact limited to the top register but that Grimaldi's desire to impose a certain uniformity on the image of the Peter cycle resulted in the adoption of this particular form of architectural structure throughout. The other possibility is that the drawing accurately transcribes what was visible and that the restoration, therefore, while most extensive in the top register, also involved other parts of the mosaic. Lending weight to the latter possibility is the fact that the tower in the bottom register coincides with an aberration in the narrative—Peter and Paul turn their backs on the action of the scene they are supposed to be participating in—suggesting some intervention here as well. Based on the evidence provided by the drawing, therefore, it seems that any assessment of the Peter cycle must take into account an extensive restoration of the first two scenes, with possibly some lesser intervention in the lower registers as well.

How plausible is this hypothesis? The restoration of churches is a task that many popes undertook, and the *Liber Pontificalis* is full of references to such activity. Although the text rarely specifies the nature or extent of these projects, other evidence indicates that they included the restoration of pictorial decoration. The best evidence for the type of restoration I am proposing comes from Sta. Maria Maggiore where at least one of the mosaic panels in the nave, the scene of the Miracle of the Quails, displays clear signs of intervention (Fig. 9). Both figure style and tessellation distinguish the three figures to the right both from those in the left half of the scene and from the rest of the cycle in general. A Carolingian date for the figures on the right, on stylistic grounds, is generally accepted.³⁵ The presence of the monogram of Pope Hadrian I (772–795) in the apse of Sta.

³⁴A. Iacobini, "Le porte bronzee medievali del Laterano," in *Le porte di bronzo dall'antichità al secolo XIII*, ed. S. Salomi (Rome, 1990), 76–91.

³⁵While the fact of a Carolingian restoration of the nave mosaics of Sta. Maria Maggiore is generally accepted, the extent of the intervention has been hotly debated: see C. Bertelli, "Un antico restauro di Santa Maria Maggiore," *Paragone* 63 (1955): 40–42; S. Spain Alexander, "Carolingian Restoration of the Mosaics

Pudenziana, documented in a seventeenth-century drawing, provides further evidence of Carolingian mosaic restoration.³⁶

The twelfth and thirteenth centuries are also periods for which mosaic restoration is known. Work was carried out on the apse mosaics of all three Constantinian basilicas—in St. Peter's under Innocent III (1198–1216), in St. Paul's under Honorius III (1216–27), and in the Lateran basilica under Nicholas IV (1288–92)—although to what extent the renewed apses reflected or even incorporated parts of the original mosaic decoration is debatable.³⁷ Evidence for the restoration of narrative cycles survives from the thirteenth century as well, both in Rome and in nearby Grottaferrata, although in these cases the medium used was fresco. The best-known example is the restoration of the narrative cycles in the nave of St. Paul's Outside the Walls, possibly carried out by Pietro Cavallini between ca. 1275 and ca. 1280.³⁸ Fire destroyed the church in 1823, making it impossible now to gauge the exact nature and extent of the restoration; however, scholars have gleaned important information from the extensive series of studies made of individual scenes for Cardinal Francesco Barberini in 1635. Comparisons between the drawings of the Old Testament scenes in St. Paul's and what is known about the corresponding cycle in St. Peter's, which St. Paul's copied, indicate that although the restorer appears to have abbreviated the early Christian cycle somewhat, he adhered quite faithfully both to the original choice of scenes and to their iconography. The existence among the drawings of two almost identical versions of the Slaying of the Firstborn Egyptians, one of which is early Christian and the other the work of the restorer, demonstrates this very clearly (Figs. 10, 11). At Grottaferrata, thirteenth-century frescoes in the nave showing Old Testament scenes were restored twice within fifty years of when they were painted.³⁹ The first restoration consisted of overpainting "a secco" directly on top of the earlier frescoes, without the application of new intonaco. This restoration was carried out in the late thirteenth century by an artist in the circle of Pietro Cavallini, if not by Cavallini himself, and was evidently intended to update the imagery stylistically; the choice of scenes and iconography was not disturbed. The second restoration was a repair job occasioned by the insertion of Gothic windows ca. 1300 in the nave wall. In this case new intonaco was applied where the frescoes were damaged and the missing imagery replaced (Fig. 12).

of S. Maria Maggiore in Rome," *Gesta* 16 (1977): 13–22; P. J. Nordhagen, "The Archeology of Wall Mosaics: A Note on the Mosaics of Sta. Maria Maggiore in Rome," *ArtB* 65 (1983): 323 f; S. Spain, "The Restoration of the Sta. Maria Maggiore Mosaics," *ibid.*, 325–28.

³⁶ Waetzoldt, *Kopien*, 73.

³⁷ W. Oakeshott, *The Mosaics of Rome* (London, 1967), 24–30, 70–73; W. Schumacher, "Eine römische Apsiskomposition," *RQ* 64 (1959): 137–202; J. Wilpert, "La decorazione Constantiniana della basilica Lateranense," *RACr* 6 (1929): 53–150; G. J. Hoogewerff, "Il mosaico absidale di S. Giovanni in Laterano ed altri mosaici romani," *RendPontAcc*, ser. 3, 27 (1951–54): 297–326.

³⁸ A. Tomei, *Pietro Cavallini* (Milan, 2000), 134–41; P. Hetherington, *Pietro Cavallini: A Study in the Art of Late Medieval Rome* (London, 1979), 81–106, with further bibliography.

³⁹ V. Pace, "La chiesa abbaziale di Grottaferrata e la sua decorazione nel medioevo," *BollGrott* 41 (1987): 47–87, repr. in *idem*, *Arte a Roma nel medioevo. Committenza, ideologia e cultura figurativa in monumenti e libri* (Naples, 2000), 417–97, esp. 453–90; M. Andaloro, "La decorazione pittorica medioevale di Grottaferrata e il suo perduto contesto," in *Roma Anno 1300*, ed. A. M. Romanini (Rome, 1983), 253–66; M. Nimmo, "Proposta per un esame storico e tecnico del ciclo di Grottaferrata," *ibid.*, 289–91. For a summary of earlier literature, see T. Strinati, "Cinque storie della vita di Mosè," in *Bonifacio VII e il suo tempo*, ed. M. R. Tosti-Croce (Milan, 2000), 200 f, cat. no. 155.

Although the restoration jobs in St. Paul's Outside the Walls and at Grottaferrata involved frescoes, there seems no reason why similar restoration work cannot be envisioned for a mosaic, given the renewed activity in this medium in Rome during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

If a restoration of the Peter mosaics in the oratory of John VII, based on the evidence just cited, is accepted as possible, when might it have occurred? An inscription in the oratory's north wall, recording the translation of relics into the chapel during the pontificate of Hadrian I, provides evidence of Carolingian intervention in the vicinity of the Peter cycle. However, mosaic is a durable medium, and it seems unlikely that restoration would have been necessary so soon after the mosaics were made.⁴⁰ The turn of the twelfth century is also a period for which new activity in the oratory of John VII is recorded; following the introduction of Veronica's Veil into the chapel, Celestine III (1191–98) constructed a ciborium to house the relic, and Innocent III instituted a procession of the Veronica from St. Peter's to the hospital of Santo Spirito.⁴¹ Moreover, the form of the towers in the Peter cycle also points to a date in the latter part of the twelfth century as indicated by the comparisons drawn above with the towers at Müstair and on the bronze doors of Celestine III (Figs. 7, 8). It seems more probable, therefore, that restoration of the Peter cycle took place around this time as part of a larger project to refurbish the oratory for its new function as cult site of the most celebrated holy image in Rome.⁴²

For those sections of the cycle that seem not to have been affected by restoration, that is, the Dispute before Nero, the left half of the Flight and Fall of Simon Magus, and the martyrdom scene, the evidence is consistent with an attribution to the patronage of John VII for the reasons already discussed above. Compositional elements of these scenes, as well as the form and placement of their inscriptions, find parallels both in the oratory's christological cycle and in the surviving John VII material in Sta. Maria Antiqua. The Peter cycle displays the same overall visual structure as the christological cycle, and it shared the same mosaic medium. Finally, the frescoes preserved from Sta. Maria in Via Lata and in Sta. Maria Antiqua provide evidence for the decoration of churches and chapels with hagiographic narrative in this period.

An examination of the iconography of these scenes lends some additional support to an early date. The second half of the Peter cycle in the oratory of John VII is closely related to a number of later monumental cycles, including both the eighth-century and the twelfth-century frescoes at Müstair, the late eleventh-century frescoes in S. Pietro in Tuscania, and the twelfth-century cycles in Sta. Maria in Monte Domenico at Marcellina, the Cappella Palatina in Palermo, and the cathedral at Monreale.⁴³ Also related are the

⁴⁰The inscription is visible in Fig. 2. For a transcription and discussion, see Grimaldi, *Descrizione*, 106; van Dijk, "Oratory," 17 f, 27 f, 31–33. The inscription is currently in the Vatican grottoes, in the Cappella delle Partorienti.

⁴¹On the ciborium, see Grimaldi, *Descrizione*, 105–7 passim, 122 f; de Blaauw, *Cultus et Decor*, 669. On the institution of the procession, see *Gesta Innocentii III*, 144, PL 214:200–203; Innocent III, *Epistula* 10, 179, PL 215:1270 f.

⁴²This issue will be examined in detail in a study I am presently working on that deals with the later history of the oratory and its transformation into the Veronica chapel.

⁴³On the frescoes at Müstair, see L. Birchler, "Zur karolingischen Architektur und Malerei in Münster-Müstair," in *Frühmittelalterliche Kunst in den Alpenländern*, Akten zum III. Internationalen Kongress für Frühmittelalterforschung (Olten-Lausanne, 1954), 220–25; Brenk, *Romanische Wandmalerei*, 44–49. On those in Marcellina: G. Matthiae, "Les fresques de Marcellina," *CahArch* 6 (1952): 71 ff, esp. 78. On those in Tuscania: C.-A. Isermeyer, "Die mittelalterlichen Malereien der Kirche S. Pietro in Tuscania," *Kunstgeschichtliches Jahr-*

thirteenth-century frescoes that decorated the portico facade of old St. Peter's and their copies in the upper church of S. Francesco in Assisi and the church of S. Piero a Grado near Pisa, although in many ways these monuments constitute a new and distinct iconographic phase.⁴⁴ Despite the fact that a number of apocryphal texts exist giving differing accounts of the apostles' activities in Rome, these pictorial cycles all follow the same version of the events as was depicted in the second half of the oratory cycle, including scenes of the Dispute of Peter and Paul with Simon Magus before Nero and the Flight and Fall of Simon Magus, and in many cases ending with representations of the apostles' martyrdom.⁴⁵

Almost identical representations of the Dispute appear in most of the cycles listed above, starting with the ninth-century frescoes at Müstair (Fig. 13) and including the eleventh-century frescoes at Tuscania, the twelfth-century cycles at Müstair, Marcellina, Palermo, and Monreale (Fig. 15), and the thirteenth-century frescoes at Pisa.⁴⁶ As in the oratory cycle, Nero, attended by one or more guards, sits enthroned to one side of the composition, opposite the two standing figures of Peter and Paul. Simon Magus is always in the center; however, placed slightly nearer to Nero and the guards, and facing Peter and Paul as they do, the magician is clearly allied with the wicked emperor and placed in opposition to the apostles.⁴⁷ The appearance of the scene among the ninth-century frescoes at Müstair indicates the existence of this iconography already in the early medieval period, thus lending credence to the possibility that its appearance in the oratory of John VII belonged to the initial phase of the chapel's decoration. However, the consistency with which the episode was represented in the later cycles prevents it from serving as proof for the early date of the version in the oratory.

Somewhat more variation exists in depictions of the following scene, the Flight and Fall of Simon Magus, although the question of the relation of the image in the oratory to the other examples is complicated by the evidence of restoration work carried out on the mosaic. The scene appears in every one of the comparative monuments listed above, although the ninth-century image at Müstair is largely obscured by the twelfth-century

buch der Bibliotheca Hertziana 2 (1938): 289 ff, esp. 294 f; O. Demus, *Romanesque Mural Painting*, trans. M. Wittall (London, 1970), 301 f. On the Sicilian mosaics: O. Demus, *The Mosaics of Norman Sicily* (New York, 1950), 46, 118–20, 294–99; E. Kitzinger, *The Mosaics of Monreale* (Palermo, 1960), 33–50; E. Borsook, *Messages in Mosaic: The Royal Programs of Norman Sicily (1130–1197)* (Oxford-New York, 1990), 29–31, 59–61.

⁴⁴On the portico cycle, see Grimaldi, *Descrizione*, 164, 167–78; J. Wollesen, *Die Fresken von San Piero a Grado* (Bad Oeynhausen, 1977), 105–12. On S. Piero a Grado: *ibid.* On Assisi: H. Belting, *Die Oberkirche von San Francesco in Assisi* (Berlin, 1977), 56 f, 91, 133 f, pls. 5, 49–52. On the relationship between the three, see also J. Wollesen, "Perduto e ritrovato: Una riconsiderazione della pittura romana nell'ambiente del papato di Niccolò III (1277–1280)," in *Roma Anno 1300* (as above, note 39), 345–47.

⁴⁵For the textual sources, see note 11 above.

⁴⁶Birchler, "Münster-Müstair," 222–24; Isermeyer, "S. Pietro in Tuscania," 94; Demus, *Norman Sicily*, 46, 118 f, 296, pls. 43b, 83; Borsook, *Messages in Mosaic*, 29–31, 59–61, pls. 54, 55, 76; Wollesen, *S. Piero a Grado*, 51–54, pl. 22. The scene in Marcellina is poorly preserved, and only the right half of the 12th-century version of the scene at Müstair survives; however, in both cases what remains corresponds to the other images: see Matthiae, "Marcellina," 78; Brenk, *Romanische Wandmalerei*, 44 f, fig. 20. Grimaldi, *Descrizione*, 164, 179, also describes a scene of the Dispute among the portico frescoes of old St. Peter's; however, his description is somewhat confused, and no illustration is provided as the scene had already been destroyed when Grimaldi wrote.

⁴⁷The images in Tuscania and Pisa include some additional figures and two dogs at the feet of Simon Magus, by which the image refers to a specific moment in the rather long dispute recorded in the apocryphal texts. These figures, however, are inserted into an iconographic framework that is otherwise identical to that of the other examples cited.

version of the same scene painted on top of it.⁴⁸ In this case, the apocryphal text is quite explicit in describing the episodes, mentioning many details that aided in visualizing the scene.⁴⁹ For example, the text states that Simon Magus launched his flight from a tall tower made of wood and that winged demons carried him through the air. The roles of the two apostles are also distinguished; Paul knelt in prayer while Peter commanded the “angels of Satan” to let the magician fall. Consequently, in most representations, such as the fresco in S. Pietro in Tuscania (Fig. 14), a tall tower of scaffolding dominates the scene. The figures of Paul kneeling and Peter with one arm raised appear to one side while an enthroned Nero observes from the other. Where the representations differ is in the depiction of Simon Magus. Like the drawing of this scene in the oratory, the fresco in S. Pietro in Tuscania shows the magician twice, once above the tower, borne aloft by two small winged demons, and the second time at the foot of the tower, plummeting to his death. The inclusion of two figures of Simon Magus appears to be characteristic of an early iconographic phase; in addition to the eleventh-century frescoes at Tuscania, the same iconography appears in the late tenth-century Antiphonary of Prüm (Paris, Bibl. Nat., MS lat. 9448, fol. 54v).⁵⁰ By contrast, in the twelfth- and thirteenth-century representations of this scene, such as the one at Monreale (Fig. 15), the magician appears only once, either flying or falling but not both. The appearance of two figures of Simon Magus in the oratory’s version of this scene clearly ally it with the earlier phase of the iconography.

The final scene in the oratory, showing the Crucifixion of Peter and the Decapitation of Paul, appears in only five of the related monumental cycles: the twelfth-century cycles at Müstair and Monreale and the thirteenth-century frescoes in old St. Peter’s, Assisi, and Pisa.⁵¹ However, the incidence of these two scenes is not confined to narrative cycles; they also appear as isolated motifs, primarily in liturgical manuscripts, making the body of comparative material considerably larger than for the other scenes.⁵² While there are many variations in the depiction of Peter’s crucifixion showing little in the way of a discernable pattern, the opposite is true for representations of the Decapitation of Paul, as Luba Eleen demonstrated in her detailed study of the subject.⁵³ Images of the Decapitation of Paul made in western Europe (with the exception of Italy) consistently show the apostle facing his executioner, but the moment depicted changes over time; until ca. 1100 the moment before the execution is depicted, but from the twelfth century on Paul

⁴⁸Matthiae, “Marcellina,” 78; Isermeyer, “S. Pietro in Tuscania,” 94; Demus, *Norman Sicily*, 46, 118 f, 299, pl. 83; Kitzinger, *Monreale*, 42; Borsook, *Messages in Mosaic*, 29–31, 59–61, pls. 55, 56, 76; Grimaldi, *Descrizione*, 167, fig. 64; Wollesen, *S. Piero a Grado*, 55–57, pl. 25; Belting, *Oberkirche*, pl. 50a; Birchler, “Münster-Müstair,” 224 f; Brenk, *Romanische Wandmalerei*, 46, fig. 23.

⁴⁹The story is recounted in chaps. 48–56 of the *Passio* and chaps. 70–77 of the *Acta*: see Lipsius and Bonnet, *Acta apostolorum*, 1:160–67, 207–11; Shotwell and Loomis, *See of Peter*, 175 f; Erbetta, *Apocriphi*, 2:189 f.

⁵⁰A. Goldschmidt, *German Illumination*, vol. 2 (New York, n.d.), 17, pl. 68; Eleen, *Pauline Epistles*, 22, fig. 33.

⁵¹Brenk, *Romanische Wandmalerei*, 47, fig. 22; Demus, *Norman Sicily*, 46, 118 f, pls. 77a, 81; Kitzinger, *Monreale*, 36; Borsook, *Messages in Mosaic*, 29–31, 59–61, pls. 74, 78, 79; Grimaldi, *Descrizione*, 169, 171, figs. 66, 67; Wollesen, *S. Piero a Grado*, 60–75; pls. 28, 35; Belting, *Oberkirche*, 91, pls. 5bc, 50b, 51a. Doubtless the scenes also appeared in the 9th-century frescoes at Müstair; however, they remain covered by the later layer, and their iconography is unknown.

⁵²Eleen, *Pauline Epistles*, 22 f, 103 f; Wollesen, *San Piero a Grado*, 60–75, table 4; Carr, “Iconography of St. Peter,” 160–62.

⁵³Eleen, *Pauline Epistles*, 9, 22 f, 103 f.

regularly appears already headless. By contrast, Byzantine representations consistently show the executioner standing behind Paul and the moment before execution. The series of cycles to which the oratory is related seems to represent a hybrid of these two traditions; as in the Byzantine images, the executioner stands behind the apostle, but following the western tradition, the moment depicted changes over time. In the later examples, starting with the twelfth-century images at Müstair (Fig. 7) and Monreale, the executioner's work is already completed. Showing Paul still alive, the image in the oratory of John VII thus again appears to belong to an earlier phase of the iconographic tradition than the twelfth-century images at Müstair and Monreale.

Iconographic analysis cannot provide conclusive proof that the scenes in the second half of the Peter cycle in the oratory of John VII date to the early eighth century. However, through the isolation of two important iconographic details—the inclusion of two figures of Simon Magus in the scene of his flight and the depiction of the moment before Paul's decapitation—it does indicate quite clearly that the cycle belongs to an earlier rather than later medieval iconographic tradition, and one that certainly predates the twelfth century. Therefore, while the state of the evidence is such that any conclusions drawn from it must remain tentative, analysis of the iconography in conjunction with the internal and external criteria discussed above support the notion that from the beginning the decoration of John VII's oratory included a hagiographic cycle illustrating Peter and Paul's activities in Rome that incorporated scenes of the apostles' conflict with and triumph over Simon Magus and concluded with their ensuing martyrdom at the hands of Nero.

The question of the Peter cycle's original opening scenes is more complicated. Did the restorers respect the original choice of subject matter and adhere more or less to the original iconography, as appears to have been the case in the restorations at Sta. Maria Maggiore, St. Paul's Outside the Walls, and Grottaferrata discussed above? Or did they alter the cycle to bring it in line with new programmatic aims? Despite the distinctive towers and inscribed border, the existence of parallels to the preaching scenes' pictorial composition and inscription texts (if not their placement) among the John VII frescoes in Sta. Maria Antiqua could suggest that the restorers made relatively few and superficial changes to the iconography of the original scenes. On the other hand, there is a clear juncture between the preaching scenes and those following that divides the cycle into two distinct sections, making for a somewhat disjointed narrative. In the second half of the cycle, Peter and Paul appear and act together, and the pictorial narrative corresponds closely both to the hagiographic text on which it is based and to the later cycles discussed above. By contrast, the first three scenes of the oratory cycle spotlight Peter alone, and the repetition of the three preaching scenes in Jerusalem, Antioch, and Rome has no parallel in any other written or visual source. These observations could suggest that the cycle's first three scenes represent an alteration by the mosaics' restorers of what was originally a more uniform narrative, closer to the apocryphal text, and illustrating the joint activities of the apostles in Rome throughout. To resolve the problem it is necessary to look a little more closely at this unusual trio of scenes.

Unlike the rest of the cycle, the first two scenes, showing Peter preaching in Jerusalem and Antioch, both have some basis in the Bible. In the case of Peter in Jerusalem the basis is firm; starting with the events at Pentecost (Acts 2:14 ff), the book of Acts records

numerous occasions on which Peter preached in Jerusalem, and it is there that he makes his final appearance in the text (Acts 15:7–11) before the focus of the narrative turns to the activities of Paul. The biblical case for Peter preaching in Antioch is somewhat more tenuous; although Paul mentions a meeting between the two apostles in that city in Galatians 2:11 f, he makes no reference to Peter preaching. The passage in Galatians, however, early gave rise to an elaborate apocryphal career of the apostle in Antioch.⁵⁴ The pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* describes an encounter between the apostle and Simon Magus there as well as the conversion of a house into a church “in qua Petro apostolo constituta est ab omni populo cathedra.”⁵⁵ Originally written in Greek, the *Recognitions* were translated into Latin by Rufinus (ca. 345–410/411) whereupon they became increasingly popular in the West. Also influential were Eusebios’ *Chronological Canons*, translated and updated by Jerome, which attribute the foundation of the church of Antioch to Peter.⁵⁶ Statements to the same effect appear in the letters of Popes Leo I and Gregory I; the former makes specific reference to the apostle preaching in that city as well.⁵⁷

Peter’s occupation of the episcopal seat of Antioch was included in the apostle’s biography in the *Liber Pontificalis* when the work was compiled ca. 545.⁵⁸ In fact, the text of the *Liber Pontificalis* provides a fairly close parallel to the oratory’s Peter cycle as a whole, mentioning many of the same events that the mosaics illustrated. For example, the *vita* recounts that after Peter left Antioch, the apostle came to Rome in the time of Nero: “St. Peter, the apostle and prince of the apostles, an Antiochene, . . . first occupied the episcopal cathedra at Antioch for seven years. Peter went to Rome when Nero was Caesar and there he occupied the episcopal cathedra 25 years 2 months 3 days.”⁵⁹ Peter’s preaching activities in Rome are emphasized, as are his disputes with and triumph over Simon Magus: “He ordained two bishops, Linus and Cletus, to be present in Rome to provide the entire sacerdotal ministry for the people and for visitors; while Peter himself was free to pray and preach, to teach the people. He held many debates with Simon Magus, both before the emperor Nero and before the people, because Simon was using magical tricks and deceptions to scatter those whom Peter had gathered into Christ’s faith. When their

⁵⁴G. Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria from Seleucus to the Arab Conquest* (Princeton, N.J., 1961), 583–86; Shotwell and Loomis, *See of Peter*, 96–100, 112–16.

⁵⁵Pseudo-Clement, *Recognitiones*, 10.68–71, PG 1:1452 f; Erbetta, *Apocryfi*, 2:226 ff, esp. 235 f, and for commentary, 211–14.

⁵⁶Eusebios’ work survives only in later versions and translations by various authors, the earliest and, according to A. M. Mosshammer, the most accurate of which is Jerome’s: see A. M. Mosshammer, *The Chronicle of Eusebius and Greek Chronographic Tradition* (Lewisburg, Pa.-London, 1979), 29–83. Under the year A.D. 42, Jerome’s chronicle reads, “Petrus apostolus cum primus Antiochenam ecclesiam fundasset Romam mittitur, ubi evangelium praedicans .XXV. annis eiusdem urbis episcopus perseverat”: see R. W. O. Helm, *Die Chronik des Hieronymus*, 2d ed., *Eusebius Werke*, vol. 7, GCS 47 (Berlin, 1956), 179.

⁵⁷Leo I, *Epistula* 119, 1, PL 54:1042 (foundation of churches of Rome and Antioch); idem, *Epistula* 106, 5, PL 54:1007 f (preaching in Antioch); Gregory I, *Registrum Epistolarum*, 7.37, ed. D. Norberg, CCSL 140 (Turnhout, 1982), 501. Reference to Peter’s foundation of the church at Antioch may even have appeared in the mosaics. The drawing of the Peter cycle in Vatican Library, MS Barb. lat. 2733, fol. 89r (Grimaldi, *Descrizione*, fig. 38) shows a small church in the background of the scene in Antioch; however, in the earliest surviving version of this illustration, reproduced here in Fig. 1, the church does not appear.

⁵⁸*Liber Pontificalis*, 1:118 for the text; 1:xxxiii–xlvi, ccxxxf, 3:3–9 on the date.

⁵⁹*The Book of Pontiffs (Liber Pontificalis): The Ancient Biographies of the First Ninety Roman Bishops to AD 715*, trans. and intro. R. Davis (Liverpool, 1989), 1.

disputes had lasted a long time, Simon was struck down by God's will."⁶⁰ The text closes with a statement of Peter and Paul's joint martyrdom and Peter's burial near the site of his crucifixion: "he was crowned with martyrdom along with Paul in the 38th year after the Lord suffered. He was buried . . . close to the place where he was crucified . . . on the Vatican . . . on 29 June."⁶¹

The summary account of the apostle's life in the *Liber Pontificalis* cannot be considered a textual source for the oratory's Peter cycle; it lacks many of the narrative details from the apocryphal texts illustrated in the mosaics' Simon Magus and martyrdom scenes. However, it puts emphasis on most of the same aspects of the story that are portrayed in the pictorial cycle, including Peter's activities in Antioch and his preaching in Rome. Furthermore, while the text in the *Liber Pontificalis* is a Petrine narrative, like the oratory cycle it includes Paul in the story by mentioning his martyrdom along with Peter's, indicating how inextricably entwined the lives of the two apostles were in Roman tradition.⁶² Offering an early medieval textual counterpart to the oratory's Peter cycle that allows one to bridge the two halves of the narrative depicted in Grimaldi's drawing, the biography of Peter in the *Liber Pontificalis* lends credibility to the notion that from the beginning the pictorial cycle may have opened with earlier versions of the preaching scenes that Grimaldi recorded in the first three panels.

The pictorial evidence points toward the same conclusion. The closest iconographic relative to the first three scenes in the oratory's Peter cycle is the image of Paul preaching in Rome among the ninth-century frescoes at Müstair, which follows the same compositional pattern of a central preaching figure flanked by auditors (Fig. 16).⁶³ The image at Müstair seems to have been derived from an image of Paul preaching in the synagogue that appears in cycles of narrative Acts imagery going back to the fifth-century frescoes in the nave of St. Paul's Outside the Walls (Fig. 17).⁶⁴ This material suggests that the scenes of Peter preaching in the oratory of John VII were the product of improvisation, ultimately patterned on a single image of Paul preaching in the synagogue. The immediate model, however, may have already adapted that iconography to show Paul preaching in Rome and appeared in a pictorial cycle more closely based on the apocryphal texts, like the cycle at Müstair.

It is more likely that the original creator of the oratory's decoration was responsible for the improvisation than the restorer. Although no examples have survived, preaching imagery seems to have been fairly common in early medieval Rome. According to the

⁶⁰Ibid., 2.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Sedulius Scottus' tituli for a pallium donated by Empress Irmingard (d. 851) to St. Peter's provides a slightly later example of another cycle that emphasizes Peter alone in the early scenes, including his connection with Antioch, but switches its focus to the joint activities of Peter and Paul in Rome at the end: see MGH, *Poetae latini aevi carolini*, ed. L. Traube, vol. 3 (Berlin, 1896), 187 f; see also Sedulius Scottus, *On Christian Rulers and The Poems*, ed. and trans. E. G. Doyle, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies (Binghamton, N.Y., 1983), 121 f. For a discussion of this text and its relationship to the oratory cycle, see Weis, "Petruszyklus," 252–55.

⁶³Birchler, "Münster-Müstair," 222. On this image see also H. L. Kessler, "An Apostle in Armor and the Mission of Carolingian Art," *Arte medievale* 4.1 (1990): 26.

⁶⁴Ibid. On the frescoes in S. Paolo fuori le mura, see also Eleen, "Life of St. Paul," 251–59.

Liber Pontificalis, Leo III (795–816) donated a precious textile to St. Paul's Outside the Walls "representing in the centre the Saviour and on the right and left SS. Peter and Paul preaching to the nations" and decorated ten of the apses of the second Lateran Triclinium with "various representations of the apostles preaching to the nations."⁶⁵ Later in the ninth century, Leo IV (847–855) donated a textile to St. Peter's decorated with an image of St. Peter preaching to the holy Roman church.⁶⁶ By contrast, preaching imagery in the later Middle Ages is far more rare. For example, although the Romanesque artists largely replicated the ninth-century imagery when the frescoes at Müstair were repainted in the twelfth century, the scene of Paul Preaching in Rome was replaced with an episode from the Dispute before Nero.⁶⁷ Moreover, none of the other later cycles to which the Peter cycle in the oratory is related—at Tuscania, Marcellina, Palermo, Monreale, Assisi, and Pisa—include images of either apostle preaching.⁶⁸ The evidence of preserved or recorded examples of preaching imagery, therefore, also points toward an early rather than later medieval context for the oratory's preaching scenes.

But perhaps the most arresting argument for considering the Peter cycle, the first three scenes included, an original part of the oratory's decoration and a product of John VII's patronage is a circumstantial one, because the imagery and the conception of papal behavior it presents correspond so closely with what we know about actual papal activity and aspirations around the time of John VII. Viewed as a whole, the imagery decorating the oratory of John VII served, at least in part, as a monumental project of self-promotion.⁶⁹ The large central panel on the east wall presented "John, the unworthy bishop and servant of the holy mother of God," in both word and image, following a biblically sanctioned tradition of gifts and service to the Virgin illustrated in the surrounding narrative scenes, especially the Annunciation, Visitation, Nativity, and Adoration of the Magi in the top register. As an original component of the oratory's decoration, the Peter cycle on the adjacent north wall would have participated in this project but injected a political element into the program.⁷⁰ Adorning the chapel with scenes from the life of his illustrious predecessor, John would have defined his own role as *vica-*

⁶⁵ *Liber Pontificalis*, 2:10 f; trans. R. Davis, *The Lives of the Eighth-Century Popes (Liber Pontificalis)* (Liverpool, 1992), 196, 198.

⁶⁶ *Liber Pontificalis*, 2:119: "habentem istoriam qualiter beatus Petrus praedicavit sanctam Romanam ecclesiam."

⁶⁷ Brenk, *Romanische Wandmalerei*, 45.

⁶⁸ The only possible exception to that statement is an intriguing but enigmatic fresco that formerly decorated a walled-up window in the church of S. Andrea Catabarbara but is known today only through a 17th-century watercolor (Windsor Castle, Royal Library, inv. no. 9164): see J. Osborne and A. Claridge, *Early Christian and Medieval Antiquities: Mosaics and Wall Paintings in Roman Churches*, ser. A, pt. 2, vol. 2 of *The Paper Museum of Cassiano dal Pozzo* (London, 1998), 82 f, cat. no. 180; Waetzoldt, *Kopien*, 29 f; T. Ashby and G. Lugli, "La Basilica di Giunio Basso sull'Esquilino," *RACr* 9 (1932): 227 f, 255. According to the watercolor, the fresco showed Peter and Paul preaching in the upper register and their martyrdom in the bottom register. The fresco's date is not known; Krautheimer dated the walling up of the window to the 10th or 11th century, but did not state his reasons for thinking so, and the church itself was destroyed in 1686: see R. Krautheimer, *Corpus*, 1:62 f.

⁶⁹ Van Dijk, "Oratory," 193–287.

⁷⁰ A political message for the Peter cycle has been proposed, but not sufficiently explored, by Schumacher and Sansterre: see Wilpert and Schumacher, *Mosaiken*, 332; J.-M. Sansterre, "Jean VII (705–707): Idéologie pontificale et réalisme politique," in *Rayonnement grec: Hommages à Charles Delvoye*, ed. L. Hadermann-Misguich and G. Raepseat (Brussels, 1982), 383.

rius Petri, with episodes chosen for inclusion in the cycle furnishing prototypes for papal behavior.

Of all the imagery in the Peter cycle, the Simon Magus scenes most strongly suggest an allegorical reading, since throughout the Middle Ages writers frequently invoked the name of the magician as a paradigm for heresy and other wickedness.⁷¹ Already in the second century, Irenaeus described Simon as the one “from whom all heresies got their start,” adding that “all those who in any way adulterate the truth and do injury to the preaching of the Church are the disciples and successors of Simon, the magician of Samaria.”⁷² From the fourth century on, the magician was associated most frequently with the crime of buying or selling ecclesiastical services or offices, eventually known as simony after him.⁷³ The magician’s association with simony, however, derives from the episode recorded in Acts 8:9–24, when Simon offered the apostles Peter and John money in exchange for the power of the Holy Spirit, and not the episode illustrated in the oratory.

Although less frequent, writers invoked Simon’s career in Rome when they wanted to convey a more general notion of heresy and sin, particularly the sin of pride. For example, Gregory of Tours recounts the story of two evil priests who rebel against their bishop, the saintly Sidonius Apollinaris of Clermont-Ferrand, removing him from control of his church and subjecting him to all kinds of indignity.⁷⁴ For Gregory the situation “smacks of heresy, that one of God’s bishops should not be obeyed in his own church, the man to whom had been entrusted the task of feeding God’s flock, and that someone else to whom nothing at all had been entrusted, either by God or by man, should have dared to usurp his authority.”⁷⁵ The priests get their just desserts, however, and Gregory compares their deaths to those of two famous heretics. The first “went off to the lavatory and while he was occupied in emptying his bowels he lost his soul instead . . . [like] Arius, who in the same way emptied out his entrails through his back passage in the lavatory.”⁷⁶ The second priest, having seized church property and behaved in a most arrogant manner, died suddenly at a lavish banquet he had organized. On this Gregory comments that the priest “was dashed headlong from the very summit of his pride, like Simon Magus at the behest of the holy Apostle,” adding that doubtless “these two who plotted together against their holy Bishop now have their place side by side in nethermost hell.”⁷⁷

A second example, closer in time to John VII, concerns one Polychronios who was condemned at the Sixth Ecumenical Council (680–681) for being a proponent of Mono-

⁷¹E. Amann, “Simon le magicien,” *DTC* 14.2:2133–40; J. Leclercq, “Simoniaca Heresis,” *Studi gregoriani* 1 (1947): 523–30.

⁷²Irenaeus of Lyons, *Contra haereses*, 1.23.2, 1.27.4, trans. K. J. Unger, *Ancient Christian Writers* 55 (New York-Mahwah, N.J., 1992), 82, 92.

⁷³H. Meier-Welcker, “Die Simonie im frühen Mittelalter,” *ZKircheng* 64 (1952–53): 61–93; A. Bride, “Simonie,” *DTC* 14.2:2143–47.

⁷⁴Gregory of Tours, *Historiae Francorum*, *Gregoire de Tours. Histoire des Franks. Texte des manuscrits de Corbie et de Bruxelles*, ed. H. Omont and G. Collón. Collection des Textes pour servir à l’Étude et à l’Enseignement de l’Histoire, vols. 2, 13 (Paris, 1886–1893; repr. Paris, 1913), 2.23.

⁷⁵Idem, *The History of the Franks*, trans. L. Thorpe (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1974), 135.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Ibid., 137.

theletism, a christological heresy that denied the existence of Christ's human will. In the *Liber Pontificalis*, the arrival of the Acts of the council in Rome is recorded in the life of Leo II (682–683). According to the Roman account, the Acts “condemned Cyrus, Sergius, Honorius, Pyrrhus, Paul and Peter, also Macarius and his disciple Stephen, and Polychronius the new Simon—those who said or preached that there was one will and operation in the Lord Jesus Christ.”⁷⁸ The Acts themselves elucidate the reference to the magician.⁷⁹ When questioned about his beliefs during the fifteenth session of the council, in April 681 Polychronios had requested permission to give a public exposition of his faith in the presence of a dead man so that by resuscitating the corpse with the power of his prayers he might demonstrate the validity of his beliefs. The council concurred, Polychronios was provided with a cadaver, and the assembly adjourned to the atrium of the Baths of Zeuxippos. Polychronios placed a manuscript containing his confession of faith on the corpse and began murmuring in its ear, an activity he apparently kept up for hours. When he was finally obliged to admit defeat, the crowd reportedly burst out, hurling anathemas at “the new Simon . . . Polychronius, misleader of the people.”⁸⁰ The council then condemned and deposed Polychronios as a heretic and fraudulent demagogue. He was sent to Rome and confined to a monastery, where he died without recanting. In both the Acts of the council and the *Liber Pontificalis*, therefore, the reference to Simon Magus was evidently meant to underline not only Polychronios' heresy—all those condemned were advocates of Monotheletism—but also his overweening pride in presuming to possess the power of raising the dead, just as the magician had alleged that he could fly.

The appearance of the Simon Magus scenes in the oratory of John VII may have been intended as a simple affirmation of the papacy's traditional role as the champion of orthodoxy. However, the condemnation of Monotheletism at the Sixth Ecumenical Council had confirmed Rome's position as guardian of orthodox belief, ending the schism that had divided the church for much of the seventh century.⁸¹ With this issue resolved, questions of orthodoxy ceased to be a point of contention between Rome and Constantinople, and the universal church remained united in faith, at least nominally, through John VII's pontificate. True, large pockets of Monophysitism remained in the eastern Mediterranean, not to mention the more powerful threat of Islam; however, the sources give no indication that these were issues with which John VII was immediately and actively concerned.

On the other hand, the *Liber Pontificalis* devotes almost half of John VII's short biography to the issue of the unsigned canons of the Quinisext Council.⁸² Emperor Justinian II had convened this council in 691–692 to complete the work of the Fifth and Sixth

⁷⁸*Liber Pontificalis*, 1:359; trans. Davis, *Book of Pontiffs*, 78. Polychronius is also called “the new Simon” in Leo II's letter to Constantine Pogonatos, in which he confirms the Acts: see *Liber Pontificalis* 1:361 n. 2.

⁷⁹Mansi, 11:601–12. See also F.-X. Murphy and P. Sherwood, *Constantinople II et Constantinople III*, *Histoire des conciles oecuméniques* 3 (Paris, 1974), 211.

⁸⁰Mansi, 11:609c.

⁸¹For an overview of the controversy, with further bibliography, see J. Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom* (Princeton, N.J., 1987), 206–16 passim, 250–59, 275–80.

⁸²*Liber Pontificalis*, 1:385 f. On the canons of the Quinisext Council and their reception in Rome, see most recently H. Ohme, “Die sogenannten anti-römischen Kanones des Concilium Quinisextum (692)—Vereinheitlichung als Gefahr für die Einheit der Kirche,” in *The Council in Trullo Revisited*, ed. G. Nedungatt and M. Featherstone (Rome, 1995), 307–21; H. Ohme, *Das Concilium Quinisextum und seine Bischofsliste* (Berlin-

Ecumenical Councils, neither of which had issued any disciplinary canons. Although papal representatives were present and signed the canons along with all the other participants, a number of the rulings went against practices of the Roman church, and some were even openly critical of Roman custom. When the canons were sent to Rome for the signature of Sergios I (687–701), the pope refused, “choosing to die rather than consent to erroneous novelties.”⁸³ Following the example of his predecessors Justinian I (527–565) and Constans II (641–668) when faced with papal intransigence, Justinian II sent his *protospatharios* Zacharias to arrest Sergios and bring him to Constantinople, but the emperor’s designs were foiled by an outpouring of local support for the pope.⁸⁴ Alerted to the situation, the armies of Ravenna and the Pentapolis marched to Rome to protect the pope. According to the *Liber Pontificalis*, the now increasingly fearful Zacharias sought refuge in Sergios’ bedroom, eventually passing out with terror under his bed, while the pope addressed the angry crowds that had gathered outside and assured them of his safety. Zacharias was expelled from Rome, but before Justinian could respond to the situation, he too was driven from power, deposed by the usurper Leontios, who exiled the emperor to Cherson on the north shore of the Black Sea, after having him publicly mutilated in the hippodrome.⁸⁵

Ten years later and shortly after John VII became pope, Justinian regained power. Again according to the *Liber Pontificalis*: “Immediately after he [i.e., Justinian] entered the palace and obtained the imperium, he dealt with the matter of the copies of the acts he had previously sent to Rome in the time of the lord pontiff Sergius of apostolic memory, in which there were written various chapters in opposition to the Roman church. He despatched two metropolitan bishops, also sending with them a mandate in which he requested and urged the pontiff to convene a council of the apostolic church, and to confirm such of them as he approved, and quash and reject those which were adverse. But he [i.e., John VII], terrified in his human weakness, sent them back to the prince by the same metropolitans without any emendations at all.”⁸⁶ The pope had reason to fear; at approximately the same time that he received the canons of the Quinisext Council, the former patriarch of Constantinople, Kallinikos, also arrived, blinded and exiled to Rome by Justinian as punishment for performing the coronations of Leontios and his successor, Tiberios Apsimar.⁸⁷ Recently scholars have begun to credit the pope with more courage than did his eighth-century biographer, however, since not only did John VII refuse to convene a council as requested by the emperor, but he also most likely returned the canons to Constantinople without his signature.⁸⁸

New York, 1990), 8–75, both with further bibliography. The text of the canons is reproduced in Mansi, 11:929–1006; for a new edition with English translation, see *Council in Trullo*, 41 ff.

⁸³*Liber Pontificalis*, 1:373; trans. Davis, *Book of Pontiffs*, 84.

⁸⁴The incident is recounted *ibid.*

⁸⁵Nikephoros, *Breviarium historicum*, 40, ed., trans., and comm. C. Mango, CFHB (Washington, D.C., 1990), 94–99; Theophanes the Confessor, *Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1883; repr. Hildesheim, 1963), 368 f; *The Chronicle of Theophanes the Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History A.D. 284–813*, trans., intro., and comm. C. Mango and R. Scott (Oxford, 1997), 514 f. See also C. Head, *Justinian II of Byzantium* (Madison, Wisc.-London, 1972), 92–98.

⁸⁶*Liber Pontificalis*, 1:385 f; trans. Davis, *Book of Pontiffs*, 88 f.

⁸⁷Nikephoros, *Breviarium historicum*, 42, ed. Mango, 104 f; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, 1:375; *Chronicle of Theophanes*, 523. See also Ohme, *Concilium Quinisextum*, 63 f; Head, *Justinian II*, 118 f.

⁸⁸Ohme, *Concilium Quinisextum*, 62–66; Sansterre, “Jean VII,” 377–79.

Is it possible that the Peter cycle in the oratory makes reference to this issue?⁸⁹ In his recent, detailed study of the Quinisext Council, Heinz Ohme came to the conclusion that the friction that ensued between Rome and Constantinople derived not only from the content of a number of the canons but also from the list of signatures appended to them.⁹⁰ Comparing this list to the surviving subscription lists from other ecclesiastical councils, and especially that of the Sixth Ecumenical Council, he noted a number of anomalies in the order of the signatures. For one, the signatures of the bishops from East Illyricum, traditionally under Roman jurisdiction, as well as those from regions under the jurisdiction of Antioch, appear as though under the jurisdiction of Constantinople.⁹¹ More conspicuous and even more significant is the placement of Justinian's signature.⁹² Whereas in other cases the imperial signature was usually placed last, as a confirmation and ratification of the decisions reached by the ecclesiastical authorities, in the subscription list of the Quinisext Council, Justinian's name appears in first place, even before the space left for the papal signature. Both the placement of Justinian's signature and the fact that he ratified the decisions of the council before receiving papal approval had important implications for the council's definition of itself as ecumenical.⁹³ Thus in addition to the affront of being requested to ratify decisions of the Quinisext Council that condemned certain practices of the Roman church, John VII, like Sergios before him, found himself presented with a document that rearranged ecclesiastical jurisdiction at Rome's expense and embodied a conception of "ecumenical" that significantly diminished the role of the papacy in favor of the emperor.

In this situation it is conceivable that John VII judged Justinian to be guilty of the same sort of pride that had inspired earlier writers to invoke the name of Simon Magus. If this is the case, the Simon Magus scenes in the Peter cycle may have been intended as an allusion to the current situation, with Nero standing in for Justinian and the magician personifying his pride. However, invoking the apostles' triumph over the magician, they present an interpretation of the pope's handling of the affair that runs counter to the version that would shortly appear in the *Liber Pontificalis*. Moreover, the placement of the Simon Magus scenes immediately before the final image of martyrdom suggests that John VII wished to cultivate the notion that he too would choose "to die rather than consent to erroneous novelties," a decision the *Liber Pontificalis* records with approval in the biography of his more fiery predecessor Sergios.⁹⁴

An even stronger case can be made for associating the trio of preaching scenes that opened the cycle with the same issue. The choice of locale for the first two scenes is

⁸⁹The impact of one of the canons of the Quinisext Council, canon 82, on the artistic patronage of John VII has been discussed in connection with the frescoes he commissioned at Sta. Maria Antiqua: see P. J. Nordhagen, "John VII's Adoration of the Cross in S. Maria Antiqua," *JWarb* 30 (1967): 388–90; idem, "Frescoes of John VII," 50–54, 95–98; J. D. Breckenridge, "Evidence of the Nature of Relations between Pope John VII and the Byzantine Emperor Justinian II," *BZ* 65 (1972): 364–74; J.-M. Sansterre, "Jean VII," 379–82; idem, "A propos de la signification politico-religieuse de certaines fresques de Jean VII à Ste.-Marie-Antique," *Byzantion* 57 (1987): 434–40.

⁹⁰The text of the subscription list is published in Mansi, 11:987–1006; however, for a new critical edition, see Ohme, *Concilium Quinisextum*, 77–175.

⁹¹Ohme, *Concilium Quinisextum*, 208–216, 370 f.

⁹²Ibid., 345–66.

⁹³Ibid., 374–86.

⁹⁴*Liber Pontificalis*, 1:373; trans. Davis, *Book of Pontiffs*, 84.

particularly significant given the history of Rome's relationship with Jerusalem and Antioch in the second half of the seventh century.⁹⁵ Both cities had been conquered in the period of rapid Arab expansion during which most of the eastern Mediterranean fell to Islam, and by 638 both cities were without an orthodox patriarch.⁹⁶ In the resulting vacuum both Rome and Constantinople, then in schism over the issue of Monotheletism, vied for influence in the region, to the extent that they were able given the political situation. Constantinople initially seems to have gained the upper hand. Sergios, the monothelete bishop of Joppa, seized power in Jerusalem and began to ordain suffragans, and Emperor Herakleios appointed Makedonios, another monothelete, patriarch of Antioch, although he remained resident in Constantinople. Rome was not slow to respond. Pope Theodore I (642–649) deposed Sergios of Joppa and appointed Stephen of Dora papal vicar in Jerusalem. Theodore's successor, Pope Martin I (649–655), declared Makedonios a heretic and appointed John, bishop of Philadelphia, apostolic vicar in both Jerusalem and Antioch.⁹⁷ In a letter to John of Philadelphia, Martin invokes his apostolic authority to confer on his vicar the power to replace the pope in all ecclesiastical matters and to review and regulate the ecclesiastical hierarchy in all the cities under the jurisdiction of Jerusalem and Antioch, with the intent of weeding out and replacing heretics and other undesirable elements.⁹⁸

In the following decades, Rome seems successfully to have retained its influence in Jerusalem. The see was administered by a *locum tenens* appointed by Rome. By 685 Theodore, the *locum tenens* of Jerusalem during the Sixth Ecumenical Council, had been raised to the position of patriarch.⁹⁹ The situation for Antioch is more complicated. Rome's attempt to exercise control over this see as well through John of Philadelphia's appointment as apostolic vicar does not seem to have been accepted in Constantinople, where a series of monothelete patriarchs of Antioch remained in residence.¹⁰⁰ This situation

⁹⁵On the poorly documented history of the churches of Jerusalem and Antioch during this period, see C. Karalevskij, "Antioche," *DHGE* 3:592–95; S. Vailhé, "Antioche, patriarcat grec," *DTC* 1.2:1407; E. Amann, "Jérusalem (Eglise de)," *DTC* 8.1:999; G. Fedalto, "Liste vescovili del patriarcato di Gerusalemme. I. Gerusalemme e Palestina prima," *OCP* 49 (1983): 16; F. Trombley, "A Note on the See of Jerusalem and the Synodal List of the Sixth Ecumenical Council," *Byzantion* 53 (1983): 632–38. A. Linder, "Christian Communities in Jerusalem," in *The History of Jerusalem: The Early Muslim Period, 638–1099*, ed. J. Prawer and H. Ben-Shammai (Jerusalem-New York, 1996), 121–62 is disappointingly unscholarly. I was not able to consult a dissertation cited by the latter: M. Levy-Rubin, "The Jerusalem Patriarchate after the Muslim Conquest" (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1994) (in Hebrew).

⁹⁶Sophronios of Jerusalem, the indefatigable partisan of the anti-Monothelete party, died in 638. Antioch had been without an orthodox patriarch since the death of Anastasios during an uprising in the city in 610: see Downey, *History of Antioch*, 572–74.

⁹⁷E. Amann, "Martin Ier (Saint)," *DTC* 10.1:183.

⁹⁸Martin I, *Epistula* 5, PL 87:153–64, esp. 155: "ad tollendam omnem haeresim, quae verbo fidei adversatur, et ad omne vitium expugnandum, quod virtuti divinae contrarium sit; ut sic prosperans in Domino, ea quae desunt corrigas, et constituas per omnem civitatem earum quae sedi tum Jerosolymitanae tum Antiochenae, subsunt, episcopos et presbyteros et diaconos: hoc tibi omni modo facere praecipientibus nobis ex apostolica auctoritate, quae data est nobis a Domino per Petrum sanctissimum, et principem apostolorum." Another letter of Martin survives addressed to the churches of Jerusalem and Antioch, in which he warns them against Monotheletism, condemned at the Lateran Council, and informs them of the powers invested in John of Philadelphia in his capacity as apostolic vicar: idem, *Epistula* 11, PL 87:175–80. On the concept of apostolic vicar, see P. Conte, *Chiesa e primato nelle lettere dei papi del secolo VII* (Milan, 1971), 211–18.

⁹⁹Trombley, "See of Jerusalem," 632–38.

¹⁰⁰Karalevskij, "Antioch," 595.

ended only in 680–681, when the last of these, Makarios, was condemned and deposed at the Sixth Ecumenical Council.¹⁰¹ In his place Theophanes, abbot of the monastery of Baias in Sicily and a member of the Roman contingent, was elected.¹⁰² Following the council, Makarios was sent to Rome, where he was confined to a monastery.¹⁰³ Thus by the conclusion of the Sixth Ecumenical Council, Rome had not only won over Constantinople to its position in matters of orthodoxy, but had also managed to bring both Jerusalem and Antioch within its sphere of influence.

By the time Justinian held the Quinisext Council in 691–692, however, the situation seems to have changed somewhat. Among the signatures are those of two new patriarchs, George II of Antioch and Anastasios of Jerusalem.¹⁰⁴ Little is known about either of these men beyond their participation in the council; however, the fact that they both added their signatures to the subscription list when the pope so adamantly refused to do so suggests a decline in Rome's influence over the heads of the two eastern patriarchates during the previous decade.¹⁰⁵ By the time Justinian sent the canons of the Quinisext Council to John VII for his signature, the situation had changed once more. The period of Arab tolerance that had allowed the continued existence of the church in regions under their domination ended shortly after the Quinisext Council, probably as a result of increased hostilities with the Byzantine Empire. Following the death of Patriarch George II, possibly in 702 or 703, the see of Antioch fell vacant and would remain so for the next forty years.¹⁰⁶ Jerusalem was more successful in retaining a patriarch, and in 705 John V was elected to the position, which he occupied until his death, possibly in 735.¹⁰⁷ Again, little is known about this man, especially in the early part of his reign. During the iconoclastic controversy, however, he would side with the iconodules, and therefore with Rome against Constantinople. It is possible that the affiliation with Rome dated from the beginning of his tenure; however, nothing can be said with certainty in this respect.

Given the linked history of the two eastern patriarchates in their relationship with Rome during the second half of the seventh century, the appearance of two images show-

¹⁰¹ Makarios was examined during the eighth session of the council, 8 March 681, and deposed during the ninth, the following day: see Mansi, 11:331–88. An account of his trial and deposition also appears in the *Liber Pontificalis*, 1:352–54.

¹⁰² Theophanes must have been raised to the position of patriarch between the thirteenth and the fourteenth sessions of the council, held 28 March and 5 April 681, respectively. In the acts of the thirteenth session, Theophanes' name still appears near the end of the list of those present at the head of a group of monastic figures, all from "Greek" monasteries in Rome: see Mansi, 11:553 f. In the acts of the fourteenth session, however, his name has been moved to near the beginning of the list and appears among the patriarchs as "Theophanes, the venerable and most holy archbishop . . . of Antioch": see *ibid.*, 11:583 f. Theophanes' ordination as patriarch of Antioch is also recorded in the *Liber Pontificalis*, 1:354.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Mansi, 11:987 f; Ohme, *Concilium Quinisextum*, 145.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 312–15; R. Aubert, "George II, patriarche melkite d'Antioche," *DHGE* 20:591.

¹⁰⁶ Karalevskij dated the death of George II to 702/3 based on Theophanes' statement that Stephen III became patriarch of Antioch in A.M. 6234 (A.D. 742/3) following a period of forty years during which the post was vacant: see Karalevskij, "Antioch," 595; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, 1:416; *Chronicle of Theophanes*, 577. On the other hand, Eutychios, *Annales*, PG 111:1118 places the beginning of George II's tenure in 685 and states that it lasted twenty-four years, resulting in a date of 709 for the patriarch's death. Eutychios' dates, however, are considered notoriously untrustworthy for this period.

¹⁰⁷ Fedalto, "Liste vescovili," 16; R. Aubert, "Jean V, patriarche de Jérusalem," *DHGE* 27:163–64.

ing Peter preaching in Jerusalem and Antioch strongly suggests a topical reference, reasserting a tradition of Roman authority and influence in these centers. In particular, the image of Peter preaching in what may by then have been the vacant see of Antioch suggests that John VII saw the papacy as assuming responsibility over the church in that region, in the absence of a patriarch. In light of the issue of the Quinisext Council, this is especially significant given Constantinople's attempt to claim jurisdiction over the same region through the arrangement of the signatures in the subscription list. In fact, it is possible that the preaching scenes in the oratory constituted an attempt to invalidate the subscription list presented for John VII's signature through challenging the image of ecclesiastical *oecumene* it offered.

To whom would the Peter cycle have been addressed? While the imagery can be construed as John VII's response to Justinian's revival of the issue of the unsigned canons of the Quinisext Council, does it necessarily follow that its primary viewer was intended to be the emperor or, more likely, his representatives? Recent events, and especially Justinian's abortive attempt to have John VII's predecessor, Sergios, arrested, had demonstrated the importance of local support to the papacy in situations of imperial displeasure. However, the somewhat critical assessment of John VII's handling of the affair of the Quinisext canons in the *Liber Pontificalis* suggests that the pope did not enjoy unqualified approval in Rome.

In the circumstances, therefore, it seems more likely that the cycle's message was directed toward viewers in Rome in an attempt to counter criticism and garner support for John VII's actions. In fact, the first three scenes of the cycle, showing Peter preaching to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Antioch, and Rome, also appear to identify the intended audience. One of the results of the Persian and Arab expansion in the seventh century was an influx of immigrants and refugees into Rome, and by the early eighth century former inhabitants of Syria and Palestine constituted a significant presence there.¹⁰⁸ Among the most powerful monastic establishments in the city was the monastery of St. Sabas, whose monks had come from the monastery of the same name near Jerusalem.¹⁰⁹ Many Syrians, moreover, held high positions in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, providing a number of popes during the period, including John VII's predecessor, Sergios, and his immediate successors, Sissinios and Constantine.¹¹⁰ In fact, the presence of these groups surely to some extent motivated and directed Rome's involvement in the affairs of Jerusalem and Antioch during the second half of the seventh century. In addition to making claims for Roman authority and influence in Jerusalem and Antioch, therefore, the preaching scenes seem also to have functioned as a statement of papal authority over and solidarity with the emigrants who had come to Rome from the two eastern centers and who now occupied such an important position in Roman society. As such, they served as a means by which John VII hoped to enlist the support of the whole Roman population, with a special appeal to two of its most powerful minorities.

In the early eighth century, therefore, the Peter cycle in the oratory of John VII

¹⁰⁸Sansterre, *Moines grecs*, 9–41.

¹⁰⁹The presence of monks from San Saba in Rome is first attested in the acts of the Lateran Council of 649, at which they played an active role. On this and the later history of the community in Rome, see *ibid.*, 22 ff, 90 ff, 127 ff.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, 20, 39.

would have presented a very current message in the guise of hagiographic narrative. The Simon Magus scenes invoked the glorious Roman tradition of victory over heresy of all kinds and associated it with John VII and his dealings with Justinian II. The three preaching scenes, moreover, made reference to the recent history of papal involvement in the eastern patriarchates. What is particularly interesting about these scenes is that while they made that history of involvement seem to follow apostolic tradition, in reality the relationship had been inverted. Without parallel in any other literary or pictorial source, the preaching scenes adapted the narrative of Peter's life so that it reflected the activities and aspirations of the oratory's patron, John VII, allowing the pope to appear to emulate his illustrious predecessor when it was rather Peter who was being made to emulate John. Therefore, the unique historical situation that existed around the time of John VII, which seems to be so directly reflected in the highly unusual choice of scenes making up the Peter cycle, is perhaps the best argument for dating the cycle to the early eighth century and seeing it as an original, indeed integral, element of the oratory's decorative program.

Northern Illinois University